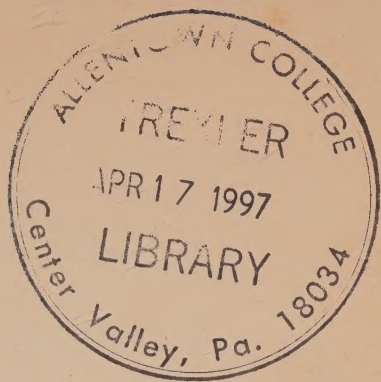


Henry L. Williams
27 April 1956



ELIZABETHAN IRELAND

NATIVE and ENGLISH

BY

G. B. O'CONNOR.



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INTRODUCTION.



UNTIL quite recently the reproach of want of knowledge of their country's history, levelled at Irishmen by Dean Swift, bore on the face of it such an impress of truth that it was held to be a national characteristic, and as such irremovable. Various reasons in explanation of this national ignorance have been given, not the least of them that the national history was for Englishmen to study, not Irishmen.

This old-time sophism has recently been revived, and though in the past it has done yeoman's service to the decriers of Irish nationalism, the present generation will ignore its harmful tendency if Englishmen, when acting on its advice, take as their guides other histories than those in which grace of style and purity of language have been made vehicles for the dissemination of political and racial misconceptions and antipathies.

The suggestion that to Irish people their country's history should continue a sealed book must have been made in the belief that nothing stimulative of true patriotism is to be found in its pages, or else, that what is recorded in them had better be forgotten. In either case a belief directly at variance with the best class of Irish thought.

Irish writers of the last century frequently insisted that if their countrymen ever became a nation it would be through a consciousness of their past history. There are unmistakable signs that this awakening is taking place. What has been termed the Gaelic revival is firmly established all over the country, is influencing more and more the daily life of the people, and arousing a desire for a better knowledge of the past. As this knowledge is acquired, what has hitherto passed for statecraft in their Governors and ruling classes will be closely scrutinised, and with the result future Governments will have to reckon.

The Empire has recently been engaged in a struggle of almost vital importance. In the course of it Irishmen repeatedly demonstrated they were quite as determined to preserve what their forefathers assisted to acquire as the other members of the British family were, thereby establishing both a claim to be considered at one with the other members of the Empire in all that makes for that Empire's advancement and permanence, and to a happier understanding with the remainder of the family.

With all sections of the nation in this unusually tolerant mood there can be no better time for reviewing the much disputed events of a vastly interesting period. Other recent occurrences also render the present particularly suitable for a revisal of some previously accepted historical theories and beliefs. We have assisted at the making of history on a large scale, and have experienced the difficulty of arriving at an undisputed conclusion upon facts well within common

knowledge. In an age of instantaneous publicity we have seen other nations deliberately misreading evidence, denying facts, and insisting upon the occurrence of incidents humanly impossible.

In addition to making us more liberal this experience should give us pause upon any subject of historical controversy. Fortunately, there is a tendency in this direction. Nothing now is taken for granted. We have become sceptical and hypercritical, and must have conclusive proofs. The fierce light of scientific research beating upon the historic as well as the human problem, upon the mud cabin as well as the throne, has taught the value of information hitherto undreamt of. Workers and thinkers in the great army of scientists are bringing to light currents of thought and influences which, followed up, may account for many of the incomprehensible vagaries of national action. In the theory of heredity we find that the key to many obscure individual characteristics is to be found in remote influences and environments long since forgotten or neglected. Cause and effect are as constant and undeviating in the nation as in the individual. May we not here find, if not a solution, at least a clue, to generations of ineffectual attempts to understand or make allowances for national peculiarities and prejudices.

In the belief that no correct or permanent solution of the Irish problem can be attained unless based upon a true knowledge of the people, their hereditary feelings and failings, their lines of thought, and the motives actuating them, the following pages are an endeavour

to assist this enlightenment by impartially depicting (without claiming the dignity of history) the country and its inhabitants during the reign of Queen Elizabeth.

The historical importance of the Elizabethan period in Ireland is incalculable. It was the period when an alien Government, threatened by the growth of new, and the rejuvenescence of old, dangers, deliberately determined upon imparting to the physical aspect of the country, and the political and social institutions of its people, the impress of their modern form. The period during which all the differences that for upwards of three centuries have plagued the country, and strained every interest connected with it, had their inception. Truly a seed time, of which subsequent generations have reaped the harvest.

In England it was an era of adventure and land hunger. A phase in the literary and exploratory activity of the time. Men's minds were inflamed by visions of an unattainable material prosperity, and possessed by a passion for new discoveries and the planting of settlements. Unfortunately for those to whom this planting of settlements meant removal from their ancestral homes, undisguised ruthlessness reigned supreme everywhere. Inhumanity was common to all nations and every sect.

Happily the present generation is scarcely able to comprehend the brutal savagery of the 16th century. That it is necessary to revive instances of it, if we are to understand the events they led up to or sprang from, must be accepted as justification for mentioning

them. Instead of, on the one side, invoking the aid of casuistry to discover symptoms of religious zeal in the perpetrators of these horrors; or, on the other, picturing them in the strongest possible light to the exclusion of all other events, we prefer to consider them as the ordinary recognised methods of the time. Only in this spirit of toleration is it possible to read dispassionately of the Elizabethan subjugation of Ireland. Wanting it, no matter how little of the Gael there may in our blood or sympathies, a feeling of hostility to the victors is engendered by their barbarity.

The period was, moreover, one when public faith and private truth were alike disregarded, when the honour of the soldier had ceased to imply an obligation or command respect, and the profession of a common religion overrode the claims of nationality.

In contradiction of the theory that national progress cannot take place in the absence of general private worth, the Elizabethan period was remarkable for an unprecedented advance in material prosperity and the arts. A growth not general throughout the country, but restricted to the Court, the capital, a few towns, and the country adjoining them. The outlying parts of the Kingdom were quite as benighted as many parts of Ireland. Therefore, when assessing the value of descriptions of Ireland by Spenser, and contemporary Englishmen, we must not forget they had been accustomed to Court, college, or town life in their own country. Forced to dwell near the bogs of Dartmoor, on the Yorkshire moors, or in the bleak

Fell country, they would have been among a people equally strange in language, manners, and customs. with the wild Irish.

For depicting the social intimate life of the Elizabethan Irish we have but few of the sources of information fortunately available in the sister countries. State documents and chronicles, when condescending to notice such trivial details, did so perfunctorily ; so that we are forced to rely upon the descriptions and inferences of a few writers to whom the possibility of their writings becoming objects of national interest centuries afterwards never presented itself.

In State papers and contemporary official narratives, the authorities usually drawn upon by English writers for their knowledge of Elizabethan Ireland, we find public events portrayed with all the minuteness of recent and familiar occurrences, and invested with the local and periodic colouring necessary to their comprehension, by those who had exceptional opportunities for knowing them. Invaluable and indispensable as this material is, there is all the more reason when using it to recollect that the writers were influenced by current prejudices and similar causes to those which produced, or rendered possible, what they record. That, in many cases, they emanated from, or were inspired by, individuals whose reputation and interest depended upon the people they criticise being represented in the worst possible light. That, in fact, they are simply *ex parte* statements. "At a distance from the supreme seat of power, and with the advantage of being able to make such repre-

sentations of the state of Ireland as they pleased, the English vicegerents acted with the less reserve.”¹ In addition, to utilise the material provided by one side only, when material equally authentic is available from the other, is the work of a partisan ; no matter upon which side engaged. To this practice, and the equally common one of presenting facts, divested of their surroundings and thus rendered misleading, many of the errors popularly received can be traced. Two of the worst offenders in this respect are Lord Macaulay and Mr. Froude. Though the most widely read, they were not the only travellers in a region of prejudice and malevolence. The early Victorian period was singularly prolific in matters inimical to an unbiassed consideration of Irish polemics, past or present. Catholic Emancipation and Repeal had induced feelings and created animosities particularly galling to the English public. Never before had the nation been bearded as they were then. Consequently the national resentment appears in every sphere of national activity, literature particularly. No serious writer of any notoriety escaped the infection ; and no writer whose opinions have been coloured by the literature of that period has escaped its poisonous influence.

Macaulay—the Napoleon of historians—brings into the field of dispute an immense army of authorities ; his sentences move forward to their objective with the stately and rythmical tread of victorious veterans ; his command of large and beautiful similes enables him to launch them at the most vulnerable part of an

¹ Leland.

opponent. Reason itself becomes prisoner to the force of illustration culled from all quarters and all branches of learning, and neither surprise nor doubt is felt at the conclusions reached. Nothing leads us to discover that the victory has been gained as much by what was left unnoticed as by what was proved. That, in fact, the gifted author is a partisan of partisans. In his descriptions of Ireland there is nothing in itself improbable. Granting that the poverty and condition of the country were as his authorities allege, they were not so for the reasons he gives alone. Had equal prominence been given to the fact that for nearly one hundred years previous to the Revolution, Ireland had been the theatre of a warfare compared with which the Thirty or Seventy Years' Wars resembled campaigns between mediæval Italian States, the backwardness and poverty of country and people would have been attributed to the right causes, and not, as now, quoted in proof that Irishmen were incapable, not alone of self-government, but even civilization.

Turning to the other offender, Mr. Froude, it is doubtful whether, despite his brilliancy of style, learning, and industry, his religious experiences did not unfit him to give an impartial description of the people now notorious for devotion to the tenets and professors of Roman Catholicism. To many readers his history appears to have been conceived and written solely in glorification of the English Reformation, a motive and treatment which at once puts him out of court as far as the Irish are concerned.

Modern histories dealing with the Elizabethan period, by Irishmen, are numerous enough. In literary power and ability they are generally inferior to those of the other side, and the majority of them labour under the disadvantage of inability to separate the religious from purely mundane matters. In the critical faculty necessary to an historian, scholarship and style, the late Mr. Lecky furnishes a notable exception to this generalisation, and is worthy of comparison with any English writer. Unfortunately for the educative effect of his historical works, many of his countrymen entertain an idea that the former atmosphere of Trinity College, and too great reliance upon hostile authorities, have resulted in their perpetuating some of the erroneous conclusions writers of other nationalities have been instrumental in circulating.

One of the best, from the national point of view, summaries of Irish histories, but little known in England, is from the pen of O'Connell the Liberator. Dedicated to the late Queen, it contains nothing to which exception can be taken. The form certainly is unusual, and was, no doubt, selected with professional instinct as that in which the most telling advocacy could be brought to bear, in a very strong case, against the misgovernment of which O'Connell was so consistent a denouncer.

Unfortunately for Ireland, she has never numbered amongst her sons a writer combining Sir Walter Scott's scholarly knowledge of former times with his delightful power of story-telling. Nor has she, until very lately, been distinguished by the appreciation

of Royalty. Had such been her good fortune, Elizabethan Irishmen might now be the lay figures round which a mighty pen had woven romances illustrating the tragedy and pathos inseparable from the imposition of a different civilization, laws, and religion, on a people accustomed for centuries to a code of laws, a faith, and society, primitive though not barbaric, eminently suitable to their country, mode of thought, and environment.

In the chapter on English policy the wholesale confiscations and spoliations of landed estates have been considered the keynote. Should any reader be inclined to doubt either cause or effect, a knowledge of the career of the great Earl of Cork (differing only in the magnitude of his acquisitions from scores of other English officials) will afford matter for hesitation, if no more. Morally indefensible but politically expedient as was the policy of Queen Elizabeth's officials, after an interval of 300 years the Ministers of another English Sovereign have practically reversed it. The land is again being vested in the class from which it was originally taken, with the difference that the chiefs and nobles formerly personifying the State are now represented by the State itself.

ELIZABETHAN IRELAND.



THE COUNTRY.

PHYSICAL ASPECT.—Though from whatever direction Ireland is approached it presents a mountainous aspect, ranges of hills intersecting it on all sides, in reality the greater part of the country is an immense shallow basin with the mountains for a rim. On the east coast—that nearest to Europe—this hilly margin approaches the coast line. A natural feature which has proved of considerable importance in the history of the country, for all authenticated or recent invasions of any permanency, having started from that direction and secured a footing, were able to descend into the plains of the midlands at will.

Formerly these natural barriers, as well as the hill features away from the coast, were large and dreary highlands, boggy in character, of purple colour and wild appearance, assisting, with the heather-covered hills of the north and west coasts, to contribute to the diversified picturesqueness of the landscape, but furnishing little to the comfort of the dwellers on them.

A large and low watershed forms the central portion of the Island. From this numerous rivers and streams derive their source, and gain volume from the boggy

hills, through gaps in which they find their way to the coasts. Prior to the seventeenth century the winter rains converted many of these streams into raging torrents, overflowing their erstwhile banks, and forming extensive lakes, large bogs, and morasses with great patches of rushes and long grass.

The frequent repetition of the Irish word for oak in place names, as in Derry, etc., and the reduced beds of most rivers, indicates in quite recent times much larger areas of forest than now exist. As late as the sixteenth century, several forests of enormous extent still remained intact. One large rectangular shaped wood covered the whole country between Limerick and Mallow in one direction, and Tipperary in the other. In the midlands the great forest of Devlin had not entirely disappeared, and Dublin was fringed with extensive woods. Others stretched from the east coasts across to Connemara. In Leix (Queen's County) a pass three miles long divided a forest of great timber mingled with hazel. Connaught and Ulster were covered with thick woods also. In all of them, mighty oaks with wide spreading boughs and gnarled trunks, reared their heads from amidst thick furze and bracken, and, with numbers of gigantic ash, alders, yews, and hollies, the latter, from their size, claiming to be forest trees, forbade access or rendered movement in any direction, except to those acquainted with the concealed paths, almost impossible. Wolves, wild hogs, red deer, and foxes roamed these forests, obtaining shelter and breeding grounds in the dense undergrowth and thickets, where the ground was

always moist, and the noxious miasma exhaling from it effectually prevented the inroads of the natural enemy, man.

Distinctive and numerous as these wooded areas were, the presence of water in the large lakes, copious rivers, and streams meandering in many cases through extensive bogs, was an equally marked feature. Bogs also, whether in the low-lying ground or on the summits of the smaller hills, were equally noticeable. Ulster was said to contain six large specimens, while Connaught, between woods and bogs, was so impassable, that before Elizabeth's time it had not, to any extent, come under English rule. Other districts were but little inferior in both bogs and morasses. So much so that in the first attempt at land legislation they were, until improved, specially exempted from any taxation.

Many of these water-logged areas having been drained their place names now alone remain to prove their former existence. But in this, as in many other instances, it is still possible, from the preservation in MS. records as late as the seventeenth century of the old custom of deriving topographical nomenclature from physical and other features, to reconstruct the whole surface of the country.

Three hundred years ago, as a basis for taxation, it was computed there were more than ten million English acres of presumably cultivable land. In a recent official return, from a total of twenty million acres, fifteen million are similarly described. Assuming the areas from which these calculations were made

to be the same, it follows, that whereas half the total area formerly was wood, bog, barren mountain land, or water, now the proportion is but one-fourth.

In its entirety a land truly, though paradoxically, described as one of wood and water : where the sough of wind through trees, and sound of many waters, was seldom absent.

Beyond the well-wooded eastern and midland districts the country presented a more open appearance. On the islets of Carbery and the West, as on the rugged stony hillocks of the northern coast, there were fewer woods, deep yellow furze taking their place. But on all alike, mainland and islands, hills and plains, interspersed between marsh and bog, forest and furze, immense areas of rich pasture lands—waste deserts full of grass—silent evidences of nature's bounty, afforded ample sustenance to numerous herds of black cattle and swine, flocks of sheep and goats, and troops of the native horse.

Though not enclosed to the present extent, the large fields were variously fenced with ditches and banks, stakes intertwined with twigs or withes, thorn hedges, or rudely built stone walls. Too often, neglect or intentional destruction by removing all pretence from these fences of their original functions, whether as shelter for the domesticated animals, or bounds to their wandering, gave the land an unkempt appearance.

Indications of agriculture, husbandry, and fruit cultivation were to be seen on all sides. Faint in some places, varied in others by large tracts of desolate

moor and upland, on which nature assiduously strove to remove all traces of man's destructive handiwork. As the century passed, all appearance of cultivation in the Irish districts practically disappeared, except in the neighbourhood of the walled towns and places dominated by the castles of nobles or chiefs. In the debatable land, neglected fields and meadows denoted English attempts at occupation long before the newly-built fort or garrisoned castle was perceived.

Wanting the red appearance of the newly-ploughed fields, or the yellow tinge of harvest time, the greater portion appeared dark and rugged, the prevailing sombreness relieved only by the radiance of lakes and streams. The exception was the Pale, or English territory, and that principally from contrast with the war-desolated lands fringing it. Later, this, too, lost the tilled and wealthy appearance Lord Deputy Sidney wrote in commendation of.

On the borders of the Pale the tops of the highest accessible hills were crowned with beacon fires, while through the length and breadth of the Irish districts other hill-tops, in the heaps of stones marking the electing places of Tanists and the Brehons' judgment seats, proclaimed the existence of an antagonistic state of society, rendering the beacon fires a very necessary precaution. Suggestive also were the crannogs, or lake dwellings, still existing on most of the lakes, conferring freedom from surprise by removing the wooden bridge connecting the crannog with the mainland, or, in other cases, by keeping all the boats on them.

Beyond the English districts were still evident the ruins of numerous raths or native forts, clusters of small stone cells (the primitive monastic establishments), and beehive-shaped huts, once the habitations of the churls, but now abandoned to herdsmen and their flocks or utilised as lurking places by troops of depredators and outlaws. Some of these ruins betrayed the hand of time ; others, in charred wood, blackened stone, and human skeletons, that of man ; but all, in common with ruined churches, devastated homesteads, and neglected fields, bearing mute testimony to the unsettled state of the times.

Ancient teampuls, shrines, and beautiful stone crosses, highly ornamented with the symbols of our faith and eternity, and as yet undefaced by the hands of mistaken zealots, were numerous in all parts, but especially north of the Pale. Equally suggestive of a long since forgotten faith were the round towers, then existing to the number of about 140. They appear to have been accepted without comment or curiosity, seldom exciting remark.

Towns, other than the mere collection of houses or farm buildings and out-offices usually dignified by that name, were less in number than at present. The largest and most important appeared, walled and guarded, isolated and solitary, like oases of English security in an ever encroaching desert of native unrest. Between them there were no large communities. Villages, in the English sense, did not exist. Occasionally at cross-roads or places of resort, so-styled houses of entertainment of the very poorest material

and construction were to be seen, but isolated dwellings and homesteads, except of the humblest description, became during the last quarter of the century rather the exception than the rule. Occasionally, also, round a sacred well or famous shrine, groups of houses, or rather cabins, had sprung up. These cabins, generally circular in shape, were constructed either of wicker-work (the interstices filled in with earth and moss and protected on the weather-side by rude boardings) or else of undressed stones laid vertically and tapered to a conical-topped roof of bracken and sods, the latter possessing the great advantage of security against fire.

Scattered over the country, approached by rude roads through bogs, or hidden in the recesses of woods, were the smaller castellated towers and houses of the inferior chiefs, and old and new Irish gentry.

Notwithstanding Ireland is essentially a stone country, and quantities of lime and other stones abound, the use of this material for building was not, for various reasons, general throughout the country in former times. Structures adapted to religious purposes and the castles of chiefs and nobles were almost the only exceptions to the employment of wood. Of the former—comprising cathedrals, churches, monasteries, and other conventual establishments—there was an immense number, many of them owing their erection to native chiefs, others to the Norman-Gaelic nobles. Judging from the ruins now or lately to be seen, and the descriptions by 16th century writers of those they knew, whether as ruins or in use, there can

be no question that in beauty of design and workmanship they were worthy of their sacred character.

Exceeding the ecclesiastical buildings in number and size, and superior to them in actual importance, the castles and fortified houses of chiefs and nobles were the most prominent features of the country districts. Squatting grim and forbidding, on eminences commanding roads, fords, and landing places, they were land marks of serious import to friend and foe alike. Islands in rivers or arms of the sea were frequently utilised to locate castles on, many of those playing a part in Elizabethan warfare being constructed in these situations. Others, again, were built athwart a river. In the County Cork alone there were said to be one hundred and sixty castles of various descriptions; and in other counties, especially the western ones, the relative numbers were not less.

In close proximity to the castles of superior chiefs would be found the long wooden dwellings of the classes dependent upon, and deriving their importance from, the chief families; clusters of cabins tenanted by the lower orders surrounding these again.

COMMUNICATIONS.—As was only to be expected in a country such as we have described, the roads were usually neither numerous nor good. With the exception of the ancient main roads converging upon Tara, those existing appeared to have been constructed less with a view to facilitate intercourse than to confine traffic to certain defined routes which were easily and usually commanded and overlooked. The tortuous character of the native

roads was probably due, in addition to this consideration, to the necessity for avoiding boggy ground ; whilst the disrepair and impassability so often said to be characteristic of them, originated in the conflict of laws and customs that restricted the enforcement of native methods of maintenance, without providing adequate means to perform the duties they had hitherto sufficed for.

The almost impassable nature of the country through the absence or inferior quality of roads, and the number and extent of woods and bogs, may be surmised from the constant repetition of orders to military and other officers to impress the common people for the purpose of constructing or maintaining toghers or causeways, roads, and passes, in districts lately acquired, or where military operations were contemplated. As a rule the opening out of the country by these means, and the erection of forts, was the first care of the English when a district came under their control.

Bridges were far from numerous, and, as a rule, of indifferent stability, constructed of timber, wattle, and gravel, needing daily repair ; or, merely planks removable at will ; the few stone structures there were being of comparatively recent introduction. The prevailing insecurity of the bridges led to the authorities granting lands to provide for the erection and maintenance of more stable and permanent structures.

Whether correctly or not, the Irish were believed to entertain an objection to bridges ; much preferring

fords or ferries. An objection accounted for by the freedom from observation or pursuit the absence of defined routes ensured marauding parties. To combat these practices and the native objections, one Elizabethan official suggested the destruction of all fords, thereby confining every description of traffic to bridges and ferries; the latter being generally maintained where small towns or religious establishments bordered a river.

CLIMATE.—There is no question, that in physical aspect and climate Ireland has changed to a greater extent within the last three hundred years than the sister countries. The continuous and extensive disforestation, draining water areas, arterial drainage, and the change in agricultural methods, by contributing to lessen the general humidity and consequent evaporation, have all assisted to effect this change. The summers appear to have become warmer and drier, and the winters less subject to prolonged frosts.

In the opinion of those foreigners who concerned themselves with the country between the Norman invasion and the Stuart period, the climate was so temperate that infectious fogs or pestilential winds were unknown.—A flattering estimate, incapable of reconciliation with references to constantly recurring plagues and pestilences, unless these visitations were imported and confined to the towns and their vicinities. Nor does it agree with the recorded opinions of military men, necessarily more observant of weather than others. During the Earl of Essex's campaign, the climate was described as the enemy's

friend, one that never failed them ! and it was customary to attribute to the malignity of it the diseases from which the English suffered when campaigning. Certainly, if the wearisome succession of wet and foul seasons, rains and bad weather, recorded by writers of the period was normal, they had some grounds for complaining of the climate.

The mortality usual amongst the English soldiers in Ireland was certainly excessive, but that it was due to climatic causes alone is more than doubtful. More probably the unaccustomed mode of living necessitated by the occupation of deep woods was the cause of it. Whatever the cause, and despite the humidity complained of, the climate was admittedly favourable to the natives and acclimatised foreigners, and to animal growth and vegetation.

PRODUCTS. — Before the Elizabethan wars, in addition to quantities of game, fowl, and fish, the whole country abounded in cattle, horses, and swine. Sheep and goats were relatively less numerous, whilst the omission of references to the ass or donkey, now so common a feature in country life, is particularly noticeable. Wool, hides, tallow, honey, and fruit were in general use, and plentiful enough to leave a surplus for exportation. Corn and other cereals were cultivated and also exported, and in the south and west a considerable quantity of fish was annually bartered for wines. Traffic in corn, particularly, was of considerable value.

That about the period of Queen Elizabeth's accession Ireland was fairly prosperous there is not a shadow of doubt. Spenser—who certainly had no

reason to love the country—described it as most rich and plentiful, full of corn and cattle. Hollinshed, likewise, about the same period, that is before the wars, considered the Island populous, well inhabited, and rich, with plenty of corn and cattle. By Camden, Leitrim was said to contain one hundred and twenty thousand head of cattle, a prodigious number.

Departing from the usual stereotyped sources of information on this point, we are able to form a truer estimate of the economic condition of the country from similar incidents to the following.

Sir Fineen O'Driscoll, an Elizabethan Knight, supplied from his castle at Cape Clear all the provisions a fleet of English warships required for some time. On the arrival of the first Earl of Essex in the north, Sir Brian MacPhelim presented him with a herd of ten thousand cattle. A right royal present truly, indicating no scarcity of heeves. Among other proofs of fertility and plenitude, in districts unaffected by the war, we find the five Midland counties, in addition to ordinary requirements, were able to provision the royalist forces throughout the country. And towards the end of the century, English soldiers in some districts were receiving half victuals and half money in lieu of rations, so as in a measure to compensate for their depreciated pay.

The prosperous condition of the whole province of Munster was attributed to its numerous cities and walled towns, commodiousness of its harbours, and fruitfulness of the land; and, in the case of part of Kerry, to its being furthest from English interference!

Making due allowance for the relative value of money, and its scarcity with the Irish, cheapness of food is undoubtedly a symptom, if not a proof, of abundant supplies. In the Irish camp at Connello a calf sold for sixpence, and a hog for a shilling. Prior to this the prices at which provisions for the troops and the Lord Deputy were taken under the cess throughout the country, were from two to three hundred per cent. less than the prices fixed by statute in England during the early part of Henry VIII.'s reign. And, although these prices were alleged to be greatly under the market ones, there does not appear to have been any difficulty in obtaining the necessary quantities.

Not without reason did the author of the *Pacata Hibernia* complain that towards the close of the war the country was exhausted of men and victuals. The amount of "prey" claimed to have been captured by the royalists alone was in itself sufficient to have impoverished the best stocked country in Europe.

CHANGES.—With the introduction of the " Undertakers " ¹—virtually another, though slightly more peaceful, invasion—an approximation to English life and conditions set in. Embryo villages and towns were springing up. Homesteads and farm buildings were being planned, and individual efforts at farming cautiously attempted. At the same time, improved communications to facilitate the passage of troops were being utilised for trading purposes, and other indications of a progressive and less primitive civili-

¹ English Colonists.

zation were common throughout the land. Tokens, unfortunately, again swept away or desolated in the great convulsion of the last decade of the century.

More potential than all these changes and transformations was the new factor in the national life then making its first appearance. In the summer, embellishing the fields with its strong green leaves and pretty flower; in the autumn, the personification of decay, converting them into charnel houses of vegetation; the potato plant was spreading all over the country.

In the nomenclature of districts, and formations of counties, changes had been effected also. The ancient names and bounds either disappearing or undergoing mutilation from time or new conditions. Offally and Leix Countries had become, in compliment to Queen Mary and her Consort King Philip, King's and Queen's Counties. The capital towns, Dingen, and Campaw or Porteloise, becoming Philipstown and Maryborough respectively. Curiously enough, long after both sovereigns had ceased to reign these towns were still known officially by their old names. Catherlogh or Carlagh became Carlow; Annaly, Longford; and Eastern Breffny, Cavan. The County of Uriel was beginning to be known as Louth and Monaghan, while the designation of Thomond was giving way to that of Clare. Meath had been subdivided, the part that with Louth was in the Pale retaining the old name, the remainder forming Westmeath. Waterford still occasionally appeared as Power's County, and Wicklow as O'Byrne's.

The shiring, as it was termed, of Munster, begun by Sir John Perrott, had not been generally adopted. Parts of West Cork and South Kerry were still known as Desmond or South Munster. Connaught and Ulster, until this period considered single Counties, were, on paper, divided as at present, by Sir Henry Sidney. This shiring, with other official acts of nomenclature equally illusory, had no foundation in reality. Much of it represented what the officials would have done had their power equalled their intentions. For all the effect it had upon the great Northern chiefs, and the countries concerned at the time, the Queen's servants might as well have shired the land in the mythical Atlantis.

THE PEOPLE.

POPULATION.—Contemporary writers, estimating the numbers of the population of Ireland during the 16th century, vary from a half to a third of the totals given ; differences indicating their calculations were largely fictitious, or advanced with a purpose.

Apart from actual figures, there has always been an impression that the population of the period was more numerous than can be demonstrated. An impression fostered or directed by political or racial sympathies, and supported by mistaken views of social and economic conditions. For instance, the cultivation of the sides or bases of mountains and hills, often quoted in proof of this impression, was more probably due to a scarcity of cultivable land owing to so much low lying ground being flooded. Similarly with the occupation of crannogs or lake dwellings. A desire for the security obtainable only by seclusion appears to have been the motive for continuing to use these ancient abodes, not objection to overcrowding.

What may be confidently affirmed is, that a few years after the accession of Elizabeth the population of Ireland had reached a figure higher, it is probable, than ever before attained, or than it again equalled for more than a century.

Beyond a series of comparisons and deductions there are no means of ascertaining the aggregate population of the country. Unreliable as these

methods confessedly are, we are compelled to make use of them.

Writing immediately before the troubles began, Sir Henry Sidney considered Munster, especially Kerry, equal in population to many counties in England. Though Munster was admittedly the most populous of the four provinces (populous being but a relative term), there, as elsewhere, the physical features of the country precluded a large population. Moreover, that the rural population could not have been numerous is clear from the evidence afforded by the Pale (exclusive of the towns) being required to furnish only fourteen hundred men, including Irish, for a rising out or general muster on an occasion when the whole available forces of the Crown were required. When using this means of obtaining an approximate idea of the numbers of the population, it must not be forgotten they are liable to be incorrect unless framed with some allowance for the different systems in force in the respective districts; the Irish system giving a larger percentage. The usual force of the Earl of Tyrone, the most powerful chief of the time, standing in a class apart with the Geraldines and Butlers, was about five thousand men, Scots included. The other chiefs, of whom there were about fifty, may be divided into two classes, represented by O'Rourke, a magnate of importance, able to muster a thousand men, and O'Sullivan Beare, with a following of two hundred. During the Elizabethan struggle, when all the sixty-seven nobles and chiefs able to maintain an armed following were ranged upon one side or the other, and

had brought into the field every able-bodied man, the aggregate of Irish under arms seldom exceeded forty thousand men. Assuming this number to represent the number of families; for instances where several members of one family were serving would be balanced by others having none; and having regard to the numerically large families common at the period, by assigning ten as the number in each family we obtain, from districts other than the Pale, a population of about four hundred thousand. Then, turning to the cities and towns, although confronted with the same conflict of opinion—one authority estimating that prior to the period under review the town of New Ross had a population of twenty thousand, a number greatly in excess of that claimed for other towns incomparably larger and more important—we get into a less doubtful atmosphere. The first known instance of a census having been taken was in Dublin. Unfortunately for our purpose, this enumeration, which gave a population of less than ten thousand, occurred at a time when the city had not recovered from the losses of the Elizabethan wars and the exodus which followed. Still, unless we are prepared to admit the capital suffered a diminution of more than a third of its population, this census supports the contention that no urban population exceeded fifteen thousand of all ranks and nationalities. Not having even this data in the case of other cities, we revert again to the military musters. From them we gather that some half a dozen other cities were approximately equal to Dublin while others, and the towns, suddenly drop to quite

insignificant numbers. Numbers that justify us in placing the urban population throughout the country at not more than a quarter of a million. Adding this to the native population, and estimating for the rural districts of the Pale a density of population equal to the districts beyond it, including Anglo-Irish and English, we may assume the total population to have been about three quarters of a million. England, with a far larger area, more numerous and far larger cities, towns, and villages—its natural characteristics and social and economic relations all favouring a large population—had at the time about four million inhabitants.

RACIAL.—The mixture of races in the island consequent on the Danish and Norman invasions had undergone still further dilutions. In the extreme south, the ports having become regular places of call for English vessels, numbers of that race had settled there. The Gaelic stock in other parts of the south, though strengthened by the long and friendly intercourse with people of similar origin from France and Spain, had racially barely managed to hold its own from the incessant raids and occupations of later Danish rovers. In the east and centre the natives had to an even greater extent been affected by these northerners. Sometimes they brought with them Saxon wives or bondwomen. At others they intermarried with the native women. And, although popularly said to have been completely expelled, their long continued occupation of some of the largest and most fertile districts of the midlands must have

appreciably affected the racial homogeneity of the population. In the towns, particularly the maritime ones, families of purely Danish extraction were still to be found. In the eastern districts families of mixed English descent were common enough, the stringent laws against marrying Irishwomen being as powerless to prevent mixed marriages as the Irish objection to unions with the English, on the ground of their being an impure deposit cast by the sea upon Irish shores, had proved in similar circumstances. In the north the Celtic population remained comparatively unsophisticated, their greatest intercourse having been with the Scoto-Gaels. The visits of these Gaels were frequent and troublesome. Sometimes they came by invitation, more frequently they came as foes, with the declared object of obtaining a footing in Antrim or Donegal. In other inland parts the Celto-Danish population was less mixed, whatever fusion had occurred being traceable to the English garrisons and the retinues of the Norman nobles.

All over the country the garrisons of fortified places and castles were reported to contain, or have dependent upon them, as many women as men. Of the women the presumption is, from the instances given of some strongholds in the Pale, and the complaint that English soldiers there were so allied with Irishwomen that they betrayed secrets and could not be trusted on dangerous services, that most of them belonged to the country, a presumption rendered all the more likely by the difficulties attendant upon movements and transport. Corroboratory of this

tendency of the English soldiers to intermarry with native women is the admission that though frequent references occur to reinforcements arriving in the country, few, if any, are met with of emerited or discharged soldiers leaving it.

Resulting from this mixture of nationalities, what manner of people were these "mere" or "wild" Irish, as they were termed by the English of three hundred years ago?

If we accept the evidence of some 16th century, as well as that of more modern, writers, they were savages of the worst type. Every failing usually attributed to low types of humanity was alleged to be inherent in them, Mr. Froude, for instance, crediting them with but one single virtue—piety. If, on the other hand, we accept as authorities Englishmen and others, who, from an actual knowledge of the country and people, have left us their impressions, we get a much less loathsome picture.

PHYSICAL CHARACTERISTICS.—These observers are practically unanimous in describing the Irish as handsome, tall, well-made, stout and healthy, with clear skins and colour—a people worthy to be praised for their strength and activity of body. All classes and both sexes were said to be accustomed to an open-air life, hardy, inured to fatigue, and capable of prolonged exertions. The women generally were pretty and well-favoured, with fresh complexions and abundant hair. None were considered handsome unless they were tall and round, of good size, and well proportioned.

References by foreign observers to individuals are frequent, and appear to have sprung more from genuine admiration than from occasionally remarking an ordinary well-favoured man amongst others less comely. A few instances will suffice. M'Sorley was said to be of handsome figure and dignified bearing. Another chief was known to his English associates as the handsome O'Reilly. Of another, the O'Rourke, it was said no one of his name excelled him in comeliness of person.

From these general and particular allusions it is impossible to avoid the conclusion that the general physique and appearance, capable as it also was of compelling the admiration of friend and foe alike, and to which even later historians have been unable to take exception, must have been uncommonly good.

Both sexes took great pride in their hair, the men wearing it crisped and long, hanging down shoulders and back. The higher classes still paid much attention to washing and combing it, whilst the lower orders wore it cut short in front so as to cover the forehead—a fashion known as the “glibb,” and on account of its distinctiveness often legislated against. Married women of all classes wore the hair bound in rolls upon the head; the unmarried, hanging down loose. Baldness was considered a great defect, not at all free from opprobrium, and, by giving rise to a nickname, usually served to identify the individual. The popular estimation in which the natural head covering was held is well illustrated by the dislike to enforcing the tonsure on priests. From illuminated manuscripts

and other authorities of the period we gather that the men conformed to the English fashion by wearing all their face hair, the enactment against wearing moustaches having fallen into abeyance.

The practice of utilising physical peculiarities to identify individuals, with the frequent recurrence of nicknames conveying allusions to red hair, leads to the belief that though, as was only to be expected from the strong Danish strain, red hair was not uncommon it still formed a distinction, the majority of the people being dark or fair-haired, according to locality.

The longevity characterising the people had already attracted attention, one of the most quaint allusions of the period to it being :—

And the people of this kingdom (Ireland) have a very long life. Some of them live up to two hundred years, and those who are born and live there can never die whilst they stay there, so that when they are feeble from old age they put them out of the island, and immediately they die.

In addition to illustrating contemporary belief in the salubrity of Ireland, this extract indicates the slight reliance to be placed upon contemporary narratives, unless first-hand, of the country and its people during the 16th century.

These travellers' stories of the prolonged immunity of the Irish from the common lot of mortals attracted considerable attention, and gave rise to numerous singular conjectures. Amongst others, Francis Bacon (Lord Verulam) had heard them, and without subscribing to their accuracy attempted to account for

the phenomenon by attributing to the Irish the habit of placing themselves naked before a fire, and seasoning their bodies with old salt butter.

The national physique and mode of living, though it contributed to the attainment of old age more noticeably than in other countries, did not prevent the visitations of plagues and pestilences. On the east coast, especially, they were practically endemic. Elsewhere the country districts suffered from them certainly, but not to the same extent as the townspeople. The contention that the pestilences were imported, and not wholly the result of poverty of living, bad as that occasionally was, derives some confirmation from one of the most virulent being known as the "English sweat," and the coast towns being the most frequent sufferers. Towards the close of the century, when whole districts and counties had been devastated, pestilences spread into the most remote corners of Ireland.

Leprosy, though seldom mentioned specifically, considering that in former times the country was never free from it, was not unknown otherwise the necessity for leper houses in some towns inland and coast would not be apparent. The cause usually assigned for this loathsome disease—eating fish out of season—decreasing with changed economic conditions would account for the diminution of the disease itself.

MENTAL CHARACTERISTICS.—The attention vouchsafed to the physical characteristics of the Irish was far exceeded by that their mental powers and peculiarities received. A distinction originating, it

would appear, in the irreconcilable contradictions of temperament and character they were supposed to display.

One writer considered them religious and very charitable, of frank and easily aroused dispositions, amorous and vain-glorious, yet passing in hospitality.¹ Another characterised them as greedy of praise and fearful of dishonour, sharp-witted, and lovers of learning. Another, an ex-priest, thought them constant in their loves and hates, seldom forgiving, quick to resent insults and injuries, too credulous, but witty, warlike, and greedy of glory, profuse, and prone to loose pleasures. Spenser, writing from an experience gained in legal disputations and law suits, considered them cautious and wily headed, easily led where inclination prompted; one very pertinent remark of this close observer being specially worthy of attention:—"Yet will some one or other subtle-headed fellow amongst them put some quirk or devise some evasion whereof the rest were likely to take hold."

Truthfulness, with all that is usually associated with that virtue, as a national attribute was a matter of dispute. The class known as the churls were notorious for saying only what would be pleasing or acceptable to their hearers, and of swearing falsely for, or at the dictation of, their social superiors and chiefs. At the same time the insistence by English officials upon pledges to ensure performance of trivial stipulations, and the allegation that in the taking of oaths to the Crown neither the sanctity of the proceedings nor the

¹ Stanihurst.

oaths themselves had any restraining influence, they never proving of any effect, does not point to much reliance upon the bare word of the better classes.

Loyalty to superiors, and the instinctive desire to please, would account for the deviations from strict accuracy attributed to the lower orders, whilst the unreliability of their social superiors indicates a condition of political or public weakness, rather than contempt for facts or disregard of realities. As witnesses, the testimony of all classes was accepted, subject only to the usual safeguards, and in social and business relations, if not deserving of the encomium of Chief Baron Coke, that no nation in the Christian world were greater lovers of truth than the Irish, they do not seem to have differed from other peoples in their attitude to truth in the abstract.

FOOD.—Until the 17th century the Irish were great meat and meal eaters, every description of flesh and game, roasted, boiled, or broiled, being included in the national dietary. With the poorer classes but little refinement was displayed in their methods of preparing the various meat diets, seething the flesh in the hide being a ready and common practice. The flesh of the badger appears to have been held in some estimation, and a favourite dish was beef broth flavoured with roots, shamrocks, and other herbs. To the general use of herbs and the tops of nettles, was probably due the belief that the Irish rebels lived on a kind of grass only. Black puddings, made from blood, were in great request, and baked in butter, used by travellers and people tending cattle in out of the way

places. Quantities of fish, fresh and salted, were consumed at all seasons ; while for winter consumption, in addition to the viands now usually salted, sheep, geese, and small game were salted down. The potato, introduced about the year 1565, had not come into general use, but several other vegetables, and the marine plants dulse and stoke, were eaten largely. Wheat, although grown all over the country and exported, was not an ordinary article of diet, being considered a luxury. Instead of it, griddled oatmeal cakes, or hazel nuts, prepared in various ways, appear to have been used. Stirabout was the usual food of young children, and milk quite the most common article of diet. Butter, besides being used in the ordinary manner, was subjected to a curious process of preservation in being wrapped in linen cloths, placed in firkins, and buried in a bog, until it became rancid and of the consistency of cheese. Honey was much used for sweetening, and in the manufacture of mead. Speaking generally there can be no question that in normal times food was plentiful and easily procured ; short-sighted wastefulness in cookery and eating characterising the people, rather than habits of economy induced by recurring seasons of scarcity, whether natural or artificial.

DRINK.—The fermented liquors manufactured and in most general use were usquebaugh, *i.e.*, whisky, ale, and mead. A partiality for these liquors, Spanish wines and French brandies, was said to mark the whole nation, particularly the better classes ; their drinking bouts usually lasting three or four days.²

² Moryson.

A national failing which more than once influenced political events, notably, Shane O'Neill's death in a drunken brawl, the seizure of young O'Donnell under pretence of a drinking bout on board ship, and the information said to have been given in return for a bottle of aqua vitæ by the Mac Mahon, the night before the battle of Kinsale. On special occasions, such as the yearly entertainments of the chiefs, weddings, or funerals, the lower orders are said to have indulged in liquors to an extent limited only by the ability to obtain them. On others circumstances restricted them to whey or milk.

Usquebaugh had a great reputation, both for drinking and medicinal purposes, and was in much request, presents of it being greatly esteemed. In the towns, cider of excellent flavour was the common drink, its manufacture having been considerably improved by the English settlers. Beer, which formed the staple drink of the soldiers, had also become a recognised beverage with the townspeople. Lord Deputy Sidney, on account of his fondness for this liquor, was known by the Irish as "Big Henry of the Beer;" and in one of his expeditions against them was said to have stimulated his force to a successful attack by a plentiful distribution of his favourite beverage.

DRESS.—Although the stringent sumptuary laws formerly in force among the Irish had in Elizabethan times ceased to be operative, custom, the effect of them, still exercised some influence upon the dress of the people by continuing one, at least, of the old regulations, that of the individual's rank deciding the

colour of his costume. The chiefs and nobles still affected bright-coloured clothes, some garments being of more than one colour.

The ordinary costume of the upper classes consisted of a linen shirt with plaited sleeves, over it a collarless coat or jacket, drawn in at the waist by a girdle, trews or trousers covering the extremities from waist to ankles, and displaying the shape of the limbs. A loose flowing, voluminous tunic, saffron in colour, and shoes of untanned hide, completed the costume. The materials ordinarily used were wool or flannel, though the nobles and chiefs imported and used silk and satin. For outdoor purposes, a cape or mantle with hood, or the long cloak, was general. Tall, conical-shaped hats with broad brims, riding shoes of costly leather, and gloves, were considered English additions to the native costume.

The peasantry generally wore a loose-sleeved tunic, reaching to the knees, and confined at the waist by a belt, skin shoes, drawers, and leggings, and in the open a frieze mantle.

What is now termed the kilt appears to have been restricted to soldiers, or worn when engaged hunting, or in the care of cattle. On the very poor the belt confining the goat or sheep-skin tunic, and the lower leg coverings, were usually of straw or plaited grass. Nearly all the churl class went shoeless, and, in the opinion of an English settler, cared little whether they wore clothes or not.

Women of the poorer classes, and those in the wilder districts, wore but one smock or garment—as a

rule containing much material—drawn in at the waist. In the more settled districts, and among the better classes, the usual costume consisted of deep-sleeved linen blouses, over voluminous sleeveless gowns, long enough to cover the feet, and fastened at the neck with a brooch, a linen fillet on the head, and a small mantle looped at the side. When suffering from fever or similar maladies they usually cut off their hair, and to keep the head warm until its covering grew again, wore great rolls of linen on it.

Furs of all sorts appear to have been largely used to trim or fringe the garments of both sexes. Veils, gloves, and prepared leather shoes, were essential to the costumes of all ladies, their belts or girdles also being of the most elaborate description.

Leathern jackets and quilted coats, adapted from the English, were in great favour for the protection they afforded against weather and sudden attack.

Though the lavish display of costly personal ornaments had, to a great extent, ceased to be a national peculiarity, gold and silver ornaments were still worn by both sexes.

The national garment was undoubtedly the hooded mantle or long cloak made of wool or flannel, and of sufficient dimensions to cover the whole body from the top of the head to the feet. Sometimes called the Connaught cloak, this garment was indispensable to both sexes and all ranks, embellishing the remainder of the costume or hiding its deficiencies, supplying the want of bed clothing at night, and on the left arm of the soldier forming a convenient and serviceable shield.

In their capacity as heralds the Bards were notorious for profuse and extravagant costumes. A description of a 16th century herald of the Geraldine family states, he was wearing a long yellow tunic drawn in at the waist by a broad belt set with precious stones and fastened by a massive gold buckle; wide sleeves, parted above the elbow, falling in voluminous folds nearly to the ground. Over this garment was a short crimson jacket, richly wrought and embroidered. A mantle, laced and fringed, thrown back to display the other clothing, was fastened at the neck by a large silver brooch. Long untanned boots completed the costume, but no mention is made of any head covering.

Though English fashions in dress had great attractions for many of the Irish nobles and gentry—they, as a rule, sparing no pains or expense to obtain them—the more enlightened chiefs were neither enamoured of the foreign garb nor blind to the political significance attached to its adoption.

The practice of presenting what were termed “parliament robes,” *i.e.*, English, as distinct in the matter of trunk hose, and neck and head coverings, from the native costume, was a matter of policy intended, in accordance with Irish custom, to be considered in the light of a pledge that the suzerain would, if necessary, protect the recipients. Similarly, the acceptance of apparel previously worn by the King, or presented personally by the Lord Deputy, had its origin in, and was analogous to, the custom of bestowing gifts upon minor chiefs and tenants—a

practice known as the custom of "tuarasdal." To assume that to the gifts of clothing alluded to as parliamentary robes the chiefs depended for their supply of civilized wearing apparel was one of the disingenuous devices of foreign writers—a device exposed in Lord Deputy St. Leger's report of the O'Donnell clamouring for parliament robes at a time when he was said to be better furnished with suitable apparel than any other Irishman, when he actually appeared before the Lord Deputy wearing "a coat of crimson velvet with twenty or thirty pairs of gold aiguillettes, a great double cloak of red crimson satin guarded with black velvet, and a bonnet set full of gold aiguillettes."

Unwilling to incur the risk of refusing the foreign garments, the chiefs occasionally took refuge in ridiculing them. One of the northern chieftains remarking at a presentation: "You will then give my chaplain permission to walk the streets with me in petticoats, and the rabble will laugh at him as well as at me." In other cases, like the M'Guinness, they used them solely to mark distinctive occasions, wearing the foreign apparel on high festival and saints' days; the native apparel on others.

Custom having decreed the wearing of head covering the badge of social standing, the lower-class Irish usually went bare-headed. To them, therefore, the prohibition against wearing a fringe of hair over the eyes was something more than a vagary of fashion: it was a real hardship.

The head covering as a mark of Englishry, was utilised by a chief near Limerick to augment his

income, he having imposed a tax of 6s. 8d. upon every person wearing a hat or bonnet when passing through his territory.

Beyond the Pale all classes went armed. The lower orders carried darts, capable of use either as thrusting or missile weapons. The long axe was in favour with the more substantial classes; and the gentry carried swords on foot, and spears when mounted. In the English districts, strict laws against carrying weapons of any description were in force.

LANGUAGE.—As late as the third quarter of the 16th century the language in general use throughout the Irish districts by all classes of the community, except officials, was that of the native inhabitants, the Gaelic-Irish, or, as it is sometimes erroneously termed, the Erse. In the Pale and districts contiguous to the large towns, we must infer from the infrequent mention of any medium of communication, such as usually obtains where differences of speech prevail, that many of the Anglo-Irish and natives were bi-lingual, or the speech in use was that objected to by Stanihurst, viz., a mingle mangle, a gallimaufreie of both the languages, neither good English, nor good Irish.

Those chiefs and nobles who had been educated in the English fashion had both languages at command. The older men, and those who had not the advantage of foreign polish, were restricted to their native tongue, or Latin. Some of the Norman-Irish nobles, in addition to writing Gaelic and collecting its literature, displayed a decided preference for its use on all occasions.

Hitherto it has been customary to pretend that the claim, thus outlined, to a predominance of the native speech until a late period has no foundation in fact, is merely a patriotic attempt to minimise the Anglican ascendancy. So far from this being the case, documentary evidence of unquestioned value confirmatory of this claim still exists, and has been often quoted. Among other details throwing light on the question, as well as the social life of the period, we find a report to the Privy Council that the Bishop of Clonfert (uncle to the Earl of Clanricard), the brother of the Earl, and other lords and gentlemen of the best houses of Connaught, neither spoke nor understood the English language. In the first parliament in which Irish chiefs sat (1541) the Earl of Ormond translated the English speeches into Gaelic-Irish for the benefit of those unacquainted with the foreign tongue. In answer to a complaint that many of the townspeople were acquiring Irish to the neglect of their own tongue, the Privy Council issued a proclamation condemning the practice. Most conclusive of all was the fact that when the services of the reformed religion came to be conducted in the language understood by the people an unforeseen difficulty arose; the rural congregations in most places only knew Irish, the new pastors, with few exceptions, knew it not. The difficulty was met by continuing the use of Latin.

From these and similar incidents it is difficult to understand how, if the contempt for and denial of the use of Irish by the English officials was what it affected to be, the government of those officials could have been

more than the simulation of control. Either there must have been less intercourse between the two nationalities than is usually admitted, or the dislike to the native language professed by English officials was assumed. The intercourse between governors and governed could not have rested on the bare basis of Latin proclamations alone. The administration of justice and collection of revenue, to take two functions only, must have been conducted through the medium of the common tongue or not at all. If other corroboration was required that the practice of terming the use of the native language a sign of degeneracy, and of claiming any result from the prohibition of its continuance, was but part of the system of decrying everything Irish, it may be found in the frequent occurrence in official orders and proclamations of Irish words and expressions when English terms would have been more in keeping with the context of the subject, and the nationality of those to whom they were addressed.

CUSTOMS. — Among the customs mentioned by contemporary writers as peculiar to the Irish, those connected with fire occupy a foremost place. Incantations and prayers were said to be still used at the lighting or renewal of household fires, and great consternation displayed if one of them died out or had been extinguished. The custom of lighting fires on the hill tops, about the time of the summer solstice (now known as St. John's fires) was rigorously observed.

Oaths and observances calculated to render more obligatory the performance of stipulations, or to denote

compliance or agreement, appeared to have entered largely into the daily life of all classes. The most repulsive of all, the drinking of a bowl of blood together to bind a solemn vow, was alleged to be in common use. Though stoutly denied, the continuance of this custom in the modified form of drinking a drop of blood mixed with liquor, appears indisputable. Swearing by the hand of the chief or lord (probably because it brought the owner of the hand on to the scene in case of perjury) was considered inferior only in binding efficacy to oaths taken on a sword or at a grave. Other efforts to invoke temporal or supernatural vengeance on delinquents were numerous. Placing the right hand in the hand of an opponent was the usual method of signifying surrender.

The pledging of relatives, preferably sons, as guarantees for good behaviour was a very prevalent custom, used to great advantage, and on more than one occasion abused, by the English.

The custom of coshering, that is, of nobles and chiefs, usually accompanied by their families and followers, leaving their own residences and wandering about amongst their sub-chiefs and tenants for nearly half the year, partook somewhat of the character of payment of rent or tribute, which was usually paid in kind. As it would have been inconvenient, if not dangerous, to move flocks and herds about the country, those to whom rent was payable proceeded to the place of its production, and literally lived upon it. Informal musters and reunions took place upon these occasions, the chief thus obtaining an impression of

the number of followers he could rely upon when taking the field.

References to "coin and livery" frequently occur in Irish histories. Originally a native custom, under the term *bonnaght* or free billeting of soldiers, it had in time developed into a system by which the food and pay of the soldier and the keep of his horse were taken from the people at the pleasure of any commander. Divided into hostile camps as Ireland was during the last quarter of the century, this exaction was considered an especial grievance by the farming class. Its attempted abolition was just as strongly resented by the land owners and territorial magnates.

Custom had invested parents with great authority over their children, especially in the selection of partners for them, and marriages were usual at an age which would now be considered too young for either sex.

MARRIAGE CUSTOMS.—Elizabethan writers began, and subsequent writers have continued, a series of accusations calculated to lead to the belief that the sixteenth century Irish, following in the steps of their forefathers, practised or tolerated a freedom in the relations between the sexes incompatible with any system of morality founded upon the religion they professed.

Briefly expressed, these accusations amounted to : That the Irish would marry within prohibited degrees,³ or after long continuance in matrimony, the lawfulness of which was undisputed, would obtain a decree from

³ *State Papers*, Henry VIII.

Rome annulling the marriage,³ that the least difference generally parted man and wife,⁴ and that a plurality of wives was not uncommon. By some officials these infractions of the canon law, and the moral laxity said to be generally prevalent, was attributed less to innate depravity on the part of the Irish, than to the effect of customs through which familiarity of dependence led to loose living, and facility of separation resulted from absence of obligation, either religious or moral, the marriage tie becoming a mere slip knot holding the parties together no longer than interest or inclination prompted.

It is unnecessary to present in detail the stock examples usually quoted in proof of these charges. Most of them concerned native or Norman-Irish families of rank, the latter, it was said, having become more Irish than the natives themselves, particularly in taking advantage of customs agreeable to or harmonising with the dictates of passion rather than the obligations of justice or religion.

To correctly estimate the moral tone of a people at any particular period, it is advisable to compare them with contemporary nations having similar conceptions of daily life ; at the same time keeping before us that departures from the moral code which have been considered heinous at one time have passed almost unheeded at another. Judged by any standard, the moral conditions of the Courts and society in which Henry VIII. of England, Henry III. of France, and Mary Queen of Scots, respectively moved and shone,

⁴ Goode.

and Italian society as disclosed through the tragedy of the Cenci family, would be condemned. Yet this was the period when English officials considered the Irish to be, morally, beneath contempt.

A descriptive reference to the customs and influences which still swayed the Irish in their conjugal relations, and to the moral law generally, will enable us to understand the state of affairs which induced the belief above alluded to, and contribute to a knowledge of the subject not otherwise obtainable.

By the Ancient Brehon laws the marriage tie was not considered an indissoluble one, and separation could be easily obtained, especially by the wife, though various devices to discourage the practice, such as the return of the wife's property, were in force. At the same time a renewal of matrimonial relations was also provided for. Moreover, three forms of relationship similar to that of man and wife were recognised ; relations to which we have now no parallel, except in the morganatic unions of royalty. All involved mutual obligations, were legal, and required the consent of both parties or legal process before dissolution. The first or lawful wife connection only had a religious sanction, the others were merely civil contracts. Some doubt exists whether the abduction and purchase of wives was not still possible. If so, although there is no direct authority for the inference, it would follow that what a man might buy he might also sell.⁵

Then, turning to the social relations, so far as they

⁵ Ginnell.

affect the question. All classes, except in the towns and to some extent in the Pale, owing to the peculiar construction of Irish society, were much more intimately associated than in communities whose structure was based upon different principles. The custom of coshering, for instance, brought chief and retinue into very familiar relations with their social inferiors, particularly in Elizabethan times, when numbers of gentry were reduced altogether to living, as honoured members of the family, on and with their erstwhile dependents.

There can be no question that had women in Ireland occupied a less honourable position than in other countries, nobly born English ladies would not have allied themselves with Irish chiefs and nobles, as in the following instances, all occurring in the period under review. The wife of Rory Oge O'More was first cousin to the Earl of Ormond, a cousin of the Queen's. A sister of Marshal Bagnal married the Earl of Tyrone, and the widow of Sir Philip Sidney, and Robert, Earl of Essex, took for her third husband, Ulick Earl of Clanricard.

Also tending to negative any conspicuous difference in the relations between the sexes was the position, almost approaching equality, Irish women occupied with their husbands and families. Their maiden names were never wholly lost in those of their husbands; in the management of property or influence they retained their full share of authority; and in castle and cabin, homestead and dwelling, exercised undisputed control of domestic affairs.

By going off the beaten track of historical research during this troublous period, occasional glimpses are obtained of wives and daughters of the most heroic type, proud to bear names the very mention of which was a danger, and incurring fatigues and privations the bare recital of which is appalling. Though but dimly seen through the mists of time and prejudice, in the characters of many of these Irish women we can discern enough to warrant the claim that beauty of form and capacity of intellect served but to set off in them most feminine and some masculine virtues. Notwithstanding all the blending of races among the Irish during the last three centuries characteristics which formerly distinguished them are equally evident now. Therefore, traits admittedly characteristic of them now must also have been inherited. And the morality of the Irish is proverbial.

FOSTERAGE.—The custom of fostering, or placing children during their minority in charge of persons, not blood relations, and frequently of a different social rank than the parents, entered largely into the everyday life of the Irish. Like other observances based upon the ancient laws, elaborate rules governed it. The amount payable for the child's maintenance—five hundred kine was the price for a chief or nobleman's sons—the food and treatment, and the relations between child and foster parents during fosterage and in after life, were all provided for.

The advantages to the chiefs and gentry of the custom were admitted. As a bond of alliance between superior and inferior chiefs it strengthened both, while,

by augmenting and extending the ties of kinship, it provided adherents whose devotion was beyond question, and had been frequently proved.

Native writers have usually exaggerated the advantages and ignored the defects appertaining to fostering. The statement in the "Four Masters" history: "You cannot find one instance of perfidy, deceit, or treachery, amongst those who sucked the same mother's milk," is not strictly correct. The surrender of Maynooth Castle by the foster brother of Lord Thomas of Kildare, during the 16th century appears to have been overlooked. Undoubtedly the most glaring evil of the system was that every foster brother to a chief or gentleman considered himself a gentleman also, his gentility forbade any menial employment, and being, as too frequently happened, without means of support, a predatory life was the only resource left him.

By the English governors fostering was considered responsible for much of the trouble experienced in dealing with the people. They neither troubled to investigate nor cared to understand the actual relations resulting from the custom beyond considering that it promoted concubinage. In reality, family connections consequent on fostering were the most sacred of all, it being matter of comment that between the foster children themselves more affection was usual than between natural brothers and sisters.

Condemned by official opinion, and repugnant as an essentially native usage, repeated but unsuccessful efforts were made to suppress the system. Time, and the introduction of a social order which no longer

found it useful, effected what laws and enactments had proved powerless to do, and fosterage as a political and every-day feature passed away.

DOMESTIC.—Like other primitive peoples the Irish considered hospitality a particularly sacred duty, and attached great importance to its due observation. Formerly regular establishments were maintained at which travellers and the poor were provided with food and lodging. In Elizabethan Ireland this ancient custom, with others equally characteristic of the people, had fallen into desuetude. The monasteries and religious houses which had succeeded to their functions were nearly all suppressed, and beyond the towns there were but few inns, and these not the most reputable. The want thus created was readily and willingly met by all classes. The castles and houses of the chiefs and gentry were always open to travellers and strangers, while the poorer classes ungrudgingly honoured the custom that considered travellers who had taken off their brogues in the house members of the family, and entitled, for the time being, to a seat by the fire and whatever entertainment could be afforded.

In addition to this hospitable reception of strangers and travellers, on the great feast days and yearly festivals relatives and acquaintances—seated strictly according to rank and precedence—clansmen and retainers, all alike were welcome to the prodigal profusion inclination moved the nobles and chiefs to provide, and custom decreed due from their ranks. From the quantities of drink and food consumed on

these occasions, more especially in the spacious halls of the Earls, the entertainments would be more accurately described as Gargantuan orgies, in which ostentatious profusion and careless extravagance predominated, rather than the orderly feastings of civilised beings.

This tendency to excess, and the national sentiments regarding guests and hospitality, were on several occasions during the Queen's reign used by the authorities to forward political projects, or effect the removal of individuals or septs other means had failed to coerce. The slaughter of the principal inhabitants of Leix and Offally by Sir F. Cosby, and of the O'Neills of Clandeboye by the Earl of Essex, both accomplished under cover of banquets or feastings, are instances in point.

At the entertainments of chiefs and nobles, and in the service of the Church, bees-wax candles were used. In the former, lighting up tables resplendent with white linen and richly ornamented vessels of gold, silver, or bronze, vessels of glass, and drinking horns studded with metal work and gems. In the houses of the gentry and trading classes, candles of partially peeled rushes, dipped in fat, served the same purpose to unbleached linen and pewter or wooden utensils; among the latter the medars or four-handled drinking cups being conspicuous. While in the cabins or bothies of the poor, a greased withy, or the assiduously tended turf fire, with an irreducible minimum of utensils of the commonest description, sufficed for their wants.

In connection with the dwellings of the gentry, and

homesteads of the better class farmers,—huge wooden houses, oak generally, filled in with clay, and roofed with thatch—chattels and furniture, copper utensils, and metal vessels for drinking, are frequently mentioned. With the small farmers, and followers or dependents of the gentry, furniture and domestic utensils were of the very simplest, and usually of yew wood. To those engaged in the care of cattle, the custom of spending the summer months with their charges on the high grounds, prevented both the desire for, and acquisition of, movable property. And the very poor had neither need for nor space to accommodate furniture of any description, even had the lawless state of the country not rendered display of any sort dangerous and foolish.

One or more beds, and pillows, stuffed with some soft material, and a skin-covered seat at the foot, adorned the sleeping cubicles of the chiefs and nobles, and in the houses of gentry and traders were ranged round the large apartment forming the common room. With the poorer classes beds were of an even less elaborate description, usually one corner of the cabin being littered with rushes, bracken, or moss, forming, with a log for pillow and mantle for covering, an easily prepared, and readily removed couch.

To the unsettled state of the country, rather than the poverty of the savage, the miserable and dirty condition of the humblest dwellings must be attributed. The cow, pig, or fowls, were too valuable to be left outside exposed to chance marauders. They were, therefore, too often inside. What was at first a pre-

caution became a custom, until it was too truly remarked the cabins were rather swine sties than human habitations.

Except in the coast towns, turf and wood were the only fuel. Fortunately there was no stint of either. Climatic reasons rendered fires particularly acceptable the greater part of the year, and the superstitious fears attached to their non-extinction also necessitated a constant supply of fuel. In the towns, and by the various handicrafts, charcoal was also freely used.

CASTLES.—We have already mentioned the number and importance of the castles scattered throughout the land. Many of them were of great strength, impregnable to assault unless prepared by artillery. Newark Castle, built by the notorious Shane O'Neill, resembled a regular fortification more than the ordinary residence of a chief of even Shane's power and turbulence.

Some of the castles, especially in the vicinity of the Pale, combined the baronial residence with the military fortress. A well-known instance of this was Maynooth Castle, a Geraldine stronghold. From a description of the stores of beds, goodly hangings, rich wardrobes, brave furniture, and books and MSS. in several languages, including the native, in a contemporary account of the sack of this fortalice, it is evident that unless it was an exceptional case, taste directed and wealth rendered possible the costly magnificence of some noble residences.

Though generally preserving the circular or square keep in the main buildings, the out-works and defences

of the larger castles were laid out with a view to utilise the natural advantages of the situation.

The Castle of Dunboy, for instance—which later attained some notoriety—was a long rectangular stone edifice, having a tower at one end. It was built on the edge of a strip of land open to the water on one side, a stone wall enclosing both castle and open ground. On the landward side there was an outer wall. Castle Park, renowned for its pentagonal shaped out-works, Trim Castle, and the Castle of Donegal, were all considered exceptionally strong fortifications, the latter having been described as one of the greatest and strongest in the country.

The more pretentious castles were about eighty feet square and forty feet high, the walls of immense thickness, flanked with towers and sometimes faced with sods of turf. The towers, as a rule, were square also, and lit with narrow loop-holes. One floor of the main building—some of them had four stories—was reserved for the females of the family, recesses in the walls forming sleeping places. The different floors were reached by a winding stone staircase. In some of the castles the stairs were built in the thickness of the walls. In others the staircase was outside them, and assisted, through the loop-holes, to command the sides of the main building. In the better class castles separate stairways were used by the family and domestics and soldiers.

Bawns, or fortified enclosures, followed the shape of the out-works. In the space between them and the main building the cattle, horses, or other stock,

were kept for safety. On the borders of these enclosures, and under the shelter of the battlemented wall and moat which encircled the whole area, were rough shanties of turf, littered with straw, intended for the sleeping accommodation of soldiers, servants, and followers. In the smaller castles and houses of the gentry the bawn was seldom protected by more than a ditch and bank, fringed with bushes on the near side, sufficient to shelter the stock at night, or from a sudden foray.

A peculiarity in the structure of many castles was the entrance arrangement. The iron-plated door giving access to the interior opened into a small roofed space forming an inner porch. From a chamber above, the floor of which formed the roof of this porch, the defenders were able, through an aperture in the floor, known as the murdering hole, to shoot at or spear any unwelcome visitor. In the larger castles this space was shut off by a portcullis, that, or the iron door, being manipulated from within by persons unseen. Bartizans, or machicoulis galleries, permitting the defenders to pour molten metal or boiling water on foes battering or undermining the walls, were common to all the castles.

DANGERS OF ROADS, &c.—The absence of recognised houses of entertainment in the country districts, and the indiscriminate keeping of open house by all classes, combined with the paucity of, and distance between, towns, led to the roads and approaches being infested by marauders of every description. Some worked openly in bands, others in small parties or

singly. Others again assumed the outward appearance and professed the occupations of newsboys, jesters, gamblers (called carrows), and horse boys. Numbers of these, relying upon the certainty of obtaining food and shelter, perambulated from place to place, ready at all times to minister to the insatiable desire of all classes for amusement, news, and gossip, or the no less deeply-rooted love of gambling. So prevalent was this latter vice that, individuals having lost all they possessed, frequently hazarded their personal freedom, and reduced themselves to the veritable condition of slaves. Legislation failed either to suppress this evil or its professors. Horse boys to accompany travellers for the purpose of tending their horses, or acting as guides, had become a necessity also. Frequently, through their knowledge of locality and temporary position, these pests enabled confederates to way-lay and plunder their employers. Consequent on the prevalence of these dangers in the English and adjoining districts, it became customary for travellers to proceed in strong bodies, trusting to numbers to prevent molestation. The facility with which depredators and robbers could, and did, figure as members of these itinerant classes, led to the harsh and indiscriminate enforcement of enactments against all classes of masterless men. Yet, though numbers lost their lives in consequence, these measures failed to appreciably affect the number of vagrants, or render the roads safer.

LEARNING.—It is now admitted that the Irish possess in the work of the Four Masters, the *Annals*

of the Kingdom of Ireland, and other books in Gaelic and Latin, genuine history several centuries more ancient than any other European nation possesses in its present spoken language.⁶ As far as the Elizabethan period is concerned, the Annals, compiled from personal knowledge, holograph documents, and the testimony of eye-witnesses and actors, display a veracity, fairness, and generosity unrivalled by contemporary works, and unsurpassed, if equalled, by modern historians.

From these ancient and mediæval annals two facts stand out clearly—that alone amidst northern European nations the Irish escaped the Cimmerian pall which descended on less fortunate countries during the dark ages; and that, as teachers and disseminators of learning and founders of monasteries and academies, they had worthily assisted in keeping alive the traditions of a remote and almost forgotten culture. Much of this old-time culture disappeared in the four centuries following the Norman invasion. That 'midst the never-ceasing wars and tumults any description of culture or any remnant of previous learning flourished at all beyond the walls of monasteries is proof indubitable both were natural products, not exotics.

Suggestive both of the literary decay and of the political unrest instrumental in producing it were the numberless treatises and epistles devoted to political subjects only appearing during the latter half of the 16th century. D'Arcy's *Fall of Ireland and the*

⁶ Sir J. Mackintosh.

Causes which Produced it, Douglas' treatise on the *Miseries of Ireland*, with the writings of Walsh, Waterfield, and Cusack, were some of the most notable. Other contemporary writers, native and Anglo-Irish, were numerous, not the least of them Creagh, the Roman Catholic Archbishop of Armagh, the prelate who, after his arrest, and in hourly expectation of a summons to the scaffold, was offered pardon and a reward to ordain the reformed bishops. The offer was refused.

Though, despite twenty years' residence in Ireland, the poet Spenser can hardly be claimed as an Anglo-Irishman, it was to Ireland and the works of her native poets he was indebted for many allusions in some, and the matter of other, poems and prose writings. From his Irish home and its vicinity, the descriptive natural scenery in which he excelled received its inspiration or was derived, and it was there his best work was executed. During the operations round Smerwick, Spenser became acquainted with Sir Walter Raleigh. A life-long friendship between the poetical official and the literary soldier ensued, to which English literature is indebted for the fine poem, "Colin Clout's come Home again." The most important, in an historical sense, of Spenser's works, *A View of the State of Ireland*, though not published till long after his death, had been circulated in MS. for some time prior to his departure from Ireland.

At a period when Latin was the acknowledged medium of communication between the learned of all

European countries, there are innumerable proofs that the Irish not only excelled in their knowledge of, and were capable of conducting correspondence in, it, but that this badge of culture was almost as familiar to the elder generation as their native tongue.⁷ Among other proofs, a proclamation of the year 1557 affirmed that it was written in Latin to ensure its being understood by the Irish leaders. Lord Deputy Sidney found McWilliam Eighter, a Norman-Irish noble, wanting in the English tongue, but conversant with Latin; and O'Rourke, the proud Lord of Leitrim, parleyed with the English Privy Council in the same tongue. This ability to make use of Latin was not confined to the educated males of the more cultured classes alone. In Captain Cuellar's narrative of his sojourn with the wild Irish of the West he mentions the instance of a common boy who could speak Latin, and the daughters of a chief, at whose castle Cuellar stayed, were able to understand Latin, and by means of it taught him fragments of Irish.

As a medium of literary expression, the native language was not wholly neglected either, many ballads, elegies, and songs of the period being still extant. In addition to the three O'Clerys of "Four Masters" fame, there were two families, O'Coffeys and O'Dalys, well known for their literary attainments of a religious or laudatory nature. Several of the chiefs also maintained the national taste and repute for learning. Florence MacCarthy More, though

⁷ O'Grady.

educated in the wilds of Carbery, his only companions the sons of rebel chiefs, was in actual accomplishments the equal, if not superior, of many of the scholarly courtiers of the learned Elizabeth or her pedantic successor, James. MacCarthy's letters in English are in all the essentials of education superior to any emanating from the English officials of the time in Ireland. So pronounced was MacCarthy's scholarship that one enthusiastic biographer has insinuated that to the coincidence of Sir Walter Raleigh and MacCarthy being confined in the Tower of London together, the former owed much of the varied knowledge displayed in his *History of the World*.

Even during the troublous period following the Reformation, when it was said Irishmen were more ignorant than at any previous period, through the seminaries being ruined and scarcely any competent teachers remained, a few schools, supported by the chiefs, still kept the sacred flame alight. The south in this respect was reputed better provided than the north. Amongst others a school of law and history flourished under the MacEgans in Tipperary, and in Clare the O'Davorens maintained another establishment. Later still, a college in Galway, protected by its remote situation on the brink of the Atlantic, had a large number of scholars in daily attendance, and continued flourishing until the following reign, when it was suppressed for nonconformity.

The desire for and estimation in which learning was held is also evident from one writer's statement that, although as a rule they began to learn early, he had

seen lusty fellows of twenty-five years and upwards at some primitive schools grovelling flat upon couches of straw, their books at their noses, learning, as was the custom, everything by rote.

In the less primitive establishments Latin was the principal subject taught; leechcraft, law, and caligraphy were next in importance, though other subjects were not neglected. Caligraphy had from remote times received particular attention, and was still in a measure a national specialty, great proficiency having been attained in actual penmanship, and in the composition and durability of the various coloured inks used.

To become proficient in English law Irish students were willing to undergo the privations and incur the risks of a journey to London, the names of twelve appearing in the books of two of the Inns of Court during the latter half of the century. Paris and Oxford also were familiar with them, though, characteristically, their names appear most frequently in connection with disturbances in those places. During the reign of Henry VIII. the allegation that the Irish students were the principals in the prevalent quarrels and disturbances which agitated Oxford, led to an order prohibiting their resorting to that seat of learning. Subsequently this order appears to have fallen into abeyance, for it was remarked later that a certain precursor of disturbances in Ireland was the withdrawal from Oxford (to prevent their being detained as hostages) of young chiefs and students of family.

Trinity College, Dublin, founded in 1591, did not attract scholars for some time. The country was too

unsettled, and religious dissensions too acute, for an establishment of its description to at once take the place intended by its founder.

MEDICINE.—Irish writers claim that prior to and during the 16th century the profession of medicine had attained some degree of scientific knowledge in their country. A claim that appears to be based on the honour in which the profession was held, and the assertion contained in a MS. of the year 1432 (now said to be in Dublin), that the circulation of the blood was then known to the native physicians. The first of these proofs, if they can be called such, is capable of another interpretation. For, as the system by which members of noble and learned families practically monopolised the medical profession was still in operation, the esteem in which its professors were held was more probably due to the national respect for birth and learning of any sort. Then as to the other proof. That the anticipation, by nearly two centuries, of Harvey's discovery could have remained the exclusive property of Irish physicians is in itself strange. But that a fact of such importance should have escaped observation by other writers, or have left no trace in the practice of the period, is stranger still. Failing other proof—and the scanty details we possess of their medicine and remedies contain none—we are forced to the conclusion that the professional knowledge of Irish physicians was of the empirical nature common at the period.

Another assertion is that physicians were not entitled to any reward or remuneration unless a cure

was effected, or a special agreement had been entered into, a custom sought to be connected with the bodily vigour and freedom from sickness declared to be characteristic of the people. Probably the custom, if it existed at all, was a survival from the old social system of kinship and dependency, when the majority of physicians were men of independent means.

HANDICRAFTS.—Though the practice of confining the numbers engaged in the professions and handicrafts to those possessing a hereditary right or some social status had for some time ceased to command compliance, the numbers devoted to these pursuits had in Elizabethan Ireland diminished rather than increased. Since every species of unrest, detrimental to efficiency in the arts and sciences, had become domiciled in the Island, all manual occupations, except the profession of arms and the handicrafts connected with it, were either disappearing for want of employment, or dragging on a precarious existence in the shelter of the walled towns, and considered imported occupations, to which the natives were supposed to be strangers. Metal working and musical instrument making, two handicrafts most closely identified with the daily avocations and genius of all classes; those in which most progress had hitherto taken place, were becoming lost crafts, scarcely a trace of the latter remaining in the 17th century.

Notwithstanding this unusual want of appreciation, with its resultant poverty of execution, Elizabethan Ireland afforded numerous proofs that the Irish formerly possessed both taste and the necessary skill to

carry out their ideas. Examples of wood and metal carving derived from this period and still extant, displaying in design, execution, and knowledge of metals, a proficiency equal to any contemporaneous work.

In architecture, and its contributory art, wood carving, they had likewise attained great proficiency. Cormac's Chapel at Cashel, the Church at Killishin, and the remains of Castledermot Abbey ; not to mention numerous others, all purely Irish work, exhibiting a degree of culture unsurpassed at any period. That specimens of architectural skill have been restricted almost entirely to sacred and military edifices, was due in a measure to the political and social systems of the Irish differing from those of countries in which examples of the art are now so numerous. In Ireland the tenure of lands and dignities was more evanescent than in other countries, and the incentive usually present in the erection of costly permanent buildings, other than those mentioned, was absent. That ancient examples of even these buildings are not more numerous may be fairly attributed to the incessant wars of the later Reformation period, and the iconoclastic spirit of the Cromwellian occupation. The former led to the total demolition or ruination of many military buildings, while the latter involved in a common destruction military and religious edifices alike that had escaped, or been erected, during the previous period. A similar explanation applies to ancient or mediæval specimens of the sculptor's art. Excepting crosses and shrines few of these now exist. Those best known are the figures of horsemen and galloglasses sculptured

on the mausoleum of an O'Connor, half (*sic*) King of Connaught in the 15th century.

Proof of the capacity for artistic work of the native artizans was, until well in the 19th century, furnished by a large wooden framework house, erected in an old northern town during the late Elizabethan period. On the heavy ornamental front the name of the artist responsible for the carving was displayed in Irish lettering, a sure indication of the absence of workmen of other nationalities, otherwise the English townsmen would not have employed native workmen.

References to the condition of science and handicrafts during the period under review are singularly few, a circumstance due not to the paucity of material for more extended notice, but to the tone of men's minds. The times were too hazardous, and the struggle by all classes too strenuous, to admit of many refinements. Nevertheless, recent investigations have furnished grounds for the claim that in Ireland alone among western countries is it possible to trace the growth of native architecture from the rude conceptions of primitive man to the artistic masterpieces we have mentioned.

To those unacquainted with mediæval Irish workmanship in metals, and thus unable to form an idea of what was common with the Elizabethan Irish, a rough description of the best known specimens now preserved will not be out of place. Among shrines or reliquaries—ancient boxes for containing sacred objects or papers of interest, usually rectangular in shape, and broader at the base than the top—the best known is that used

as a receptacle for the iron bell of the patron saint. The outer case of bronze with silver and gold ornaments displays taste and execution of a high order. Another, a book shrine, the Domnach Airgid, originally contained a copy of the Psalms, dated the 6th century, and a Latin copy of the Four Gospels; probably one of the oldest existing copies of these sacred books. It consists of an inner box of yew, enclosed in a bronze cover, silver plated, both fitting into an outer silver case. The last—the most recent being as late, if not later, than the 14th century—has carved on the front a group of eleven male and female figures of saints, angels, and ecclesiastics, surveying the crucifixion. Other figures show with minute accuracy the costumes of Irish nobles of the period. All the figures are of more artistic finish than is usual in contemporaneous work.

Though personal ornaments were much affected by the old Irish, relatively few specimens are now obtainable. Fortunately those that are comprise both ornaments and those intended to be used as currency as well as ornamentation. The best known are: the Tara brooch, a pattern of filagree work with settings of amber, glass, and enamel; and the Ardagh brooch, a beautiful specimen of gilt silver work.

Among crosses, that known as the Cross of Cong occupies, for beauty of design and workmanship, a place apart. It is of bronze and silver, with ornaments of gilt bronze and gold, studded with crystals and enamels. Croziers also were favourite objects of artistic adornment. To the belief that oaths taken

on them were particularly solemn and binding we probably owe the preservation of those now known. Examination of the full-sized drawing of the Aghadoe crozier in the National Museum, Dublin, or of the more recent one in Lismore Castle, will convince the most sceptical that in the art of metal working the mere Irish owed nothing to foreign influence or teaching.

Formerly, iron was wrought in some parts of the country, but for some reason, probably the native objection to disforestation, and their contempt for armour, the large quantities of timber available were not used to any large extent.

PRINTING. — Although manuscript books were common and numerous, and the art of book-binding had been long practised, Ireland was much behind other countries in the adoption and utilisation of the art of printing. Why this should have been so will probably remain a matter of conjecture. As far as the Irish were concerned the difficulty arising from the different alphabetical characters required would account for some of the delay, but this did not affect the Anglo-Irish or English settlers.

The exact year in which the first book was printed in the country is involved in some uncertainty, the honour having been claimed for the years 1551 and 1557. In both cases the books, *The Liturgy in English* and *The Booke of Common Praier*, were printed in Dublin. Probably the similarity between the last figures in the dates has caused the confusion, and the first date is the correct one. For in the last-mentioned

year Nicholas Walsh, Chancellor of St. Patrick's, introduced type in the native character, and pamphlets in English had been certainly printed before then. Before this decadal period all printed matter, when not imported as merchandise, had formed part of the personal belongings of scholarly officials or returning students. From Dublin the new fashion spread rapidly to the other coast towns in English possession, but made way very slowly inland.

AGRICULTURE.—The Irish of the sixteenth century were principally an agricultural and pastoral people, the farming class and their dependents constituting the bulk of the population. Originally, natural and social surroundings had given a national bias to this form of industry, which their insular position had served to confirm. Later, political considerations, by still more rigorously isolating the people, and throwing the upper classes entirely on their own resources, led them, in time, to consider sport and war the only occupations becoming them. The partiality for sport thus acquired necessitated the employment of numbers of the population in providing food for the appurtenances of the chase, whilst the never-ceasing internecine feuds, and the difficulty of communications, obliged all to depend upon their own exertions for food for man and beast.

Then as now, parts of the country were very backward and agriculture was comparatively neglected. A circumstance not altogether due to reliance upon a bountiful climate instead of personal exertions, nor to the wasteful and improvident methods then in vogue.

An improved system and appliances have done much for the advancement of agriculture within the last few generations, yet large tracts of country are still unprofitable. All the more reason, therefore, for admitting that, considering the primitive methods and implements in use, the acknowledged plenitude of stock, and high state of cultivation prove that neither inclination nor aptitude for agriculture and husbandry were wanting, when conditions were at all favourable. Of this there are innumerable proofs. In 1564 the whole of the north (hitherto considered the least advanced portion of the country) was said to be following all kinds of husbandry and the sowing of wheat. Spenser thought the most part of the base sort were fit for labour and industriously disposed. Fenton reported that owing to the security introduced by Florence Mac Carthy, all the Mac Carthy septs were habituated to the plough and all husbandry; and Moryson was surprised at the beauty and fertility of O'Moore's country, and the neat manner in which it was laid out for tillage. It was further said that in Leinster, beyond the Pale, the natives had so cultivated the land as to establish an unusual regularity and plenty in their districts.

Contemporary writings contain frequent references to the uncertainties of the times affecting agriculture, amongst others. The Kildare men having been concerned in some Geraldine revolt, were afraid to till their lands, and let them go out of cultivation. One of the O'Neills, as a precaution against the harvest falling into the hands of the Royalists, compelled his

followers to take an oath against sowing corn. Both sides admitted, that in the vicinity of the newly-built forts and garrisoned castles, between the Irish objecting to benefit the soldiers, and the soldiers being disinclined to sow where they might not reap, the lands were becoming waste.

The evil effects upon the cultivation of the land of some of the native customs, having for their object the compulsory support of soldiers, had been recognised, and the subject of legislation for some time. But it was not until the year 1582 that the custom of *bonnaght* was renounced by the Crown. That the native system, whereby the ranks were filled and levies provisioned, was also detrimental to agriculture, although the locality affected may not have been the actual seat of war, is proved by the fact that whenever a cessation of warfare permitted many cultivators to return to their fields, and relieved them from the burden of maintaining men under arms, farming occupations immediately began to flourish again. Still, when estimating the effect upon agriculture or husbandry of the native system, we must not forget that the system contemplated the females, and old men and boys unable to bear arms, doing most of the field work and care of cattle, and that this generally happened during the absence of the able-bodied men of the family. A diversion of labour never contemplated by the Irish system, but which adversely affected agricultural operations also, was the constant employment afforded the labouring class on the works undertaken in pursuance of the official determination to finally settle the country.

Yet these were but subsidiary factors. The main reason for the decay of agriculture during the Elizabethan period was the introduction by the Royalist commanders of systematic methods of destroying every vestige of cultivation in order to produce famine. Wanting in the quality of dogged perseverance, and inclined to fatalism, as the people undoubtedly were, the uncertainty of reaping what they had sown produced a general repugnance to agricultural pursuits. As time progressed, and no improvement in the condition of the country took place, this repugnance became confirmed. And a new generation grew up with more faith in the sword than the plough, as a means of extorting subsistence.

MARITIME.—The considerable trade with foreign parts was principally carried on by Irish vessels manned by native crews. Numbers of the natives also, especially on the south and west coasts, were employed in the constant deep sea fisheries, but the inferior description of boats and appliances at their command restricted their efforts in this direction. The coasting traffic was mainly carried on by small vessels called "barcas," or by the still more fragile "curragh," constructed of wicker-work and skins. By the French and sailors, who for fishing and trading purposes visited their coasts, the Irish were considered good and intrepid seamen.

One sept, the O'Malleys, the last representatives of independent Irish naval strength, were reported to be powerful in galleys and seamen. Under the leadership of the notorious "Grana Uaile," or Grace O'Malley,

this power was used to ravage and plunder the maritime towns and districts, both native and English. To obtain pardon for crimes committed in the course of these raids the "Queen of the West," as she was usually called, journeyed to London to interview her sister and gossip, the "Virgin Queen." Immediately on her return, while still under the influence of the loyal feeling resulting from her gracious reception, "Grana Uaile" offered Lord Deputy Sidney the services of two hundred men and three galleys. To the continuance of these services the rise of the family fortunes may be traced, for the son of this lady, Theobald Burke, having taken a prominent part with his galleys in some Royalist operations on the west and north coasts, figures in history as the first Viscount Mayo.

On another occasion the O'Malleys threw in their lot with the Irish Confederates, and by their intimate knowledge of the numerous harbours and indentations on the southern and western coasts proved of some assistance to the Munster insurgents. From their exploits on these and other occasions, familiarity with the storm-tossed mighty ocean of their native shores appears to have bred in them a fearlessness and contempt for natural dangers denied to mariners in less turbulent waters. Another naval sept were the O'Driscolls. Less piratically inclined than the O'Malleys, they in the long wars adhered to the Royalist cause.

Piracy, as distinct from plundering the coasts, was not unknown to the Irish, though not carried on so extensively or systematically as by English and Scotch

mariners. The Irish ships, or rather galleys, with their low freeboard and relatively high prow and stems, depended more upon the physical exertions of the proportionately large numbers of men they carried, than upon their ordinary rig of a single mast with one square sail. Black in colour, and low in the water, they were more adapted for stealthy depredations round the coasts than attacks upon sea-going-vessels armed with the cannon of the period, indifferent as that was.

The decay of the maritime spirit and decrease in the number of vessels of the Elizabethan Irish was the incidental result of the determination of the Queen's Government to put an end to the incursions of the Scots of the Isles, prevent the adjacent islands continuing to be used as places of refuge by undesirables, and stop the intercourse with Spain—a measure eventually effected by destroying all galleys and ships not legitimately employed or belonging to disaffected or predatory owners, and expedited by commissioning special ships for searching all the harbours and inlets of mainland and isles. The superior armament and more scientific seamanship of the English vessels soon succeeded in driving the native galleys from the sea. In this suppression of the sea-fighting power of the chiefs, as with other instances where native ideas, system, or customs were antagonistic to the more modern ones represented by the English, changed conditions told against the Irish. The days of the galley as a sea-fighting machine were numbered, and the Irish possessed no means of building ships of equal size or power with those of their opponents.

SPORT.—The numerous wild animals lurking in the immense forests, and the abundance of small game, afforded ever-present opportunities for indulging the sporting instincts of the people, and provided a recreation in which both nationalities frequently met without dispute.

Fishing, with single or three-pronged spears; falconry, coursing hares, and tracking wolves, wild boars, red deer, badgers, and otters, appear to have been the favourite forms of sport. Occasionally the use of the bow is mentioned, but the spear was the weapon ordinarily used against the larger animals. For the pursuit of these immense drives were organised, all available men of the district assembling and driving the game in a specified direction. Though intended to fall, of course, to the spears of the gentry, it was not considered a breach of etiquette for any person engaged in the battue to kill, or assist in killing, the larger description of game—a concession trivial in itself, but read by the light of the sanguinary restrictions upon the lower orders killing game intended for the amusement of their superiors in other countries, speaking volumes for the relations between the classes. The numbers employed on these occasions sometimes gave rise to complaints from the authorities that the sporting establishments of chiefs and nobles were out of all proportion to their position or the results attained, unless the sport was but the prelude to more serious occupations.

Hounds, wolf and deer, “bigger of bone and limb than a colt,” and hawks, were greatly appreciated and

in much request, considerable attention being devoted to breeding and training them in regular establishments maintained for the purpose, it being a not unusual sight amidst the retinues of the chiefs to see gaily-dressed attendants leading hounds wearing silver collars. So much were trained hawks and hounds appreciated, and the practice of sending them to England for presents attained such proportions, that it became necessary to impose a duty to discourage their exportation. For a goshawk thirteen shillings and fourpence had to be paid ; for a tiercel half this amount. In return, the English sent horses adapted for chargers—"chief" horses, as they were termed. From the Duke of Albuquerque soliciting a grant of two goshawks and four greyhounds, and the King of Spain having been presented with hounds and hawks likewise, it would appear they were appreciated abroad also.

The Irish were admitted to be excellent horsemen and fearless riders, a fact which impressed foreigners all the more from their custom of using only a small light saddle or pad, without stirrups. In the matter of horsemanship and knightly accomplishments in general there was great rivalry between them and the English gallants. Physical culture had at the time become a fashionable pursuit among the better classes in England, consequently the native gentry found most of the younger officials and adventurers who came to Ireland worthy antagonists, both in sport and war. Irish ladies appear to have been more independent horsewomen than those of other countries. They

neither rode behind male relations nor servants, nor used horses specially selected or bred for them, as was the fashion elsewhere. Their position on horse-back, on the off or opposite side to that now customary, was peculiar to them also.

The desire of the chiefs and gentry to obtain English horses for use as chargers, and the trouble taken to improve the breed of the native horse, indicates a strong appreciation of an animal since more directly associated with the country. Another frequently noticed partiality, that for decorated saddles and gilt bridles, was attributed to a barbaric taste for display. In reality it was more an atavistic reminiscence from the time when horse trappings were exacted as a tribute, and in some cases became a stipend.

AMUSEMENTS.—Music, in which the Irish were said to possess great skill, the recital of annals of war and the chase, with some form of the game of chess, were the amusements of the better classes of both sexes. For chess the poorer people substituted gossip, to which they were believed to be inordinately attached. Ladies, and females exempt from household duties also, occupied their abundant leisure in needlework and embroidery. At the latter they were reputed to be specially proficient.

Bards, rhymers, and professional musicians invariably formed part of the establishments of the chiefs and Norman-Irish nobles. The former were generally men of considerable means and local importance, their ancient reputation and knowledge as genealogists,

historians, and chroniclers of current events still casting an atmosphere of respectful consideration round them. Proof of the estimation in which they were held may be discerned in the suggestion of Florence MacCarthy, that their services should be enlisted to influence the people in favour of the English. In their licence of satire and custom of introducing in their songs disparaging remarks upon individuals, as well as from the efficacy believed to be inherent in their maledictions, the Bards possessed effective means of influencing all classes. On their suppression and disappearance the latter attribute was believed to have been appropriated by the clergy.

According to O'Curry, the musical effusions of the Bards were both plaintive and mirth-provoking, displaying considerable talent. To produce the sweet and rapid music they were renowned for (differing from the modern in the note intervals) they were in the habit of wearing the nails long and turned in like quills; an easily-detected peculiarity which often cost them dearly. During the 16th century the musical functions of the Bards were being abandoned to, or rather appropriated by, the harpers, by whom music alone was practised. Concurrently a new class of entertainers, known as rhymers, were making good their claim to the metrical branch of the bardic profession. By native accounts the ability of these rhymers to improvise must have been considerable, or their audiences not too critical, for they were reputed able to give a rhyming and fairly accurate description of an event immediately after its occurrence.

The Elizabethan legend connected with the music of "Eileen Aroon" before its appropriation and adaptation to the song "Robin Adair," if not demonstratively true, is strongly illustrative of the consideration shown to the musical profession, the abilities of the old bardic families, and their familiarity with the modern musical system. An O'Daly, desirous of contracting a marriage distasteful to his relatives, was compelled by them to leave the country. Returning secretly after some years absence he found the former object of his affections about to be married to a rival, and obtained admittance to the wedding banquet in the guise of a wandering harper. Unrecognised by the bride, he was requested by her, according to custom, to give an exhibition of his skill. O'Daly complied, and gave to the world the exquisite melody now so well known.

Harps and bagpipes were the musical instruments most commonly met with. The former varied in shape and size, had from thirty to forty or more strings, and were usually constructed of yew wood, decorated with crystals, after the native fashion. The harps most affected were small, generally triangular in shape, and of a size admitting of easy carriage, or of resting on the knee when in use. The bagpipes were of the pattern now known as Irish pipes, differing from the more modern Scotch pattern in the arrangement by which air was introduced into them.

Musicians of all classes, rhymers, and travelling jesters were always certain of a pleasant reception, food, and accommodation, if not remuneration, as they

journeyed from place to place exhibiting their musical skill and readiness in repartee, or the narration of interminable stories. Of these there appears to have been a varied assortment, the most popular, next to battles and hunting adventures, those in which the supernatural played a leading part. The activity of these itinerant vendors of amusement, as well as that of the beggar class, had been diverted into what may be termed a house to house visitation through the suppression of fairs and other assemblages of the people, where formerly they reaped their richest harvest. In the Pale districts but little difficulty was experienced in discountenancing all attempts at collecting the inhabitants. In others the chiefs stipulated not to continue holding fairs or "parles upon hills." Hurling and other national games appear to have fallen into abeyance also.

KEENERS.—Battle and murder, pestilence and famine, combined with the operations of natural laws, furnished constant employment to another class of public servants—the professional mourners or keeners. The functions of these, women generally, consisted in accompanying funeral processions, and punctuating with loud cries of mourning and grief, the lamentations and orations describing the exploits or virtues of the deceased, and the blank left by his or her removal. Native accounts state that some of these lamentations displayed considerable metrical ability, and the orations, in which an intimate knowledge of the persons and characters of the dead was a necessary feature, no small share of eloquence. On the other hand, English-

men were not so favourably impressed by the performances of these hired mourners, or the loud weeping, and violent beating of their breasts by the female relations, terming the one barbarous outcries and howlings, the others extravagant manifestations of sorrow.

GENERAL CONDITIONS.—History acquaints us with the possibility of a nation experiencing the loss of country and political independence, without to any extent reflecting in their occupations and environment what was passing in their midst. Such was not the case in Elizabethan Ireland. Though the new conditions had been imposed in some parts, and threatened in others, for years, their universal enforcement disastrously affected every part of the country, and both sections of the population. In the native and English districts alike, open rebellion, as one side termed it, resistance for liberty and conscience sake, as the other side considered it, raged intermittently. All classes in town and country suffered; the Irish and those who adhered to them the most. The decline in fortune of chiefs and nobility led to a more frequent recourse to rights and privileges that, borne cheerfully before, now served but to hasten the impoverishment of those from whom they were exacted. The illegal demands, murders, and robberies, by soldiers and predatory bands, increased the distress and poverty, while official rapacity, under the guise of precautionary measures rendered necessary by the disturbed state of the country, completed the ruin. Instances were frequent, of ladies of high rank, and chiefs, venerable

ecclesiastics and children, having been compelled to take to the woods and fastnesses, with no other shelter than that natural to such places, living like savages or animals until an opportunity offered to flee to France or Spain. The lower orders also were quitting their native districts or the country in search of the congenial means of existence the flight or shattered fortunes of their social superiors had deprived them of.

To replace this loss of population and provide labour, the new owners of the soil were importing scores of their countrymen; while numbers of Scots were hastening to the standards of those still able to entertain them. Both sections, lacking the hereditary incentives to tribal loyalty, and more bent upon personal enrichment than maintaining the public peace, threatened to become the most intolerable of all the plagues troubling the country.

Before the unceasing warfare of the border districts culminated in a general revolt the Pale counties had participated in the universal improvement in social conditions marking the Tudor period, and attained a comparatively flourishing condition. In the towns, villages, and homesteads, numerous families lived in a state of comfort and refinement equal to that of corresponding classes in England. At the same time the circumstances of the principal people had so improved, that in all the essentials of comfort and well-being there was as great a contrast between their condition and that of their predecessors as between a yeoman and a good squire.⁸

⁸ Lord Deputy Sidney.

Encompassed by difficulties of every description, with the flame of armed resistance spreading, the authorities and the means at their disposal proved unequal to the strain. Law and order practically ceased, and the prosperous condition of the Pale vanished, to be replaced by one in which idle men doing harms, spoils, and robberies, terrorised the country by day ; while the border Irish, under cover of darkness, assisted their countrymen from the native districts in nightly raids. Where before the excessive levying of cess, and the restrictions placed upon retaliatory incursions, were considered intolerable grievances, they now groaned under the impositions and exactions of the soldiers sent for their protection ; the people in many places quitting their habitations rather than be subject to them.⁹

Away towards the western and northern coasts, the economic conditions and daily life we have endeavoured to depict were still struggling for existence, the vitality displayed bearing an almost regular proportion to the distance and accessibility of the district from the seat of government.

It was a struggle which could have but one termination. Persistence in the struggle only accentuated the fact, that though in all natural essentials equal to the neighbouring peoples, the Irish were not only falling behind in the race for material prosperity, they were actually retrogressing. For this, their reluctance to part with language, manners, and customs—originally framed for a more embryonic state of society, and too

⁹ Orders in Council, Halliday MSS.

inelastic for changed conditions—was partly responsible. For the remainder, English statecraft, and the political and social environment it produced, was accountable.

The close of the Elizabethan period—the most fateful in her whole modern history—saw Ireland of the Irish launched on that career of ruinous decline she perforce trod for a whole century. Her population was decreasing. Those that remained were parting with the best of their native qualities, without acquiring or assimilating those of their conquerors. At the same time that religion and learning were becoming but memories, associated with all that is foreign to their spirit, the religious toleration common to both nationalities was giving place to a bigoted and clerically directed exclusiveness. Agriculture was fading into a tradition; and commerce into an incident of the past. The national tendency to combinings, clandestine associations, and secret practices, sure symptoms of mental or political inferiority, may be first noticed at this period. Perceptible likewise in story and song, legend and tradition, is that undercurrent of mournful sadness now considered typical of the national temperament. Dating from this period also is the growing belief, eloquent in its suggestiveness, that henceforth to the Irish their native country was no longer their home.

THE TOWNS.

URBAN EXCLUSIVENESS.—In the 16th century the municipal constitution of the cities and walled towns of Ireland was nominally similar to that which prevailed in England, such differences as there were arising from the more recent origin of the corporations, (expressed in the official designations of their chief magistrates) or from the towns being practically garrisons in the midst of a population in many respects racially distinct from them.

This isolated situation prevented any increase of population by the usual influx from the surrounding country; so that in process of time, by intermarriages and prescription, the management of municipal affairs became the monopoly of a few families in each town. Very few, indeed, of these families were of Irish extraction, and even these had originally conformed to a certain standard, and adopted both English language and costume.

In some towns the exclusiveness thus characterising them was maintained by the mode of election effectually precluding the mere Irish or their immediate descendants attaining civic honours. To such an extent was this racial differentiation carried that marrying an Irishwoman disfranchised the husband. Some of the towns, moreover, were forbidden to appoint constables, *i.e.*, governors, other than of English birth.

To this long-continued possession of civic positions, and the opportunities for aggrandisement thus afforded, the rise of what may be termed city aristocracies was due. The more important merchant families claimed to be, and were considered, gentry, marrying and associating with the nobles and landowners on equal terms; an admission of equality reflecting no slur upon the native nobles or gentry, many junior members of these classes being also engaged in trade. The false pride that affected to despise trade, while utilising to the full the wealth derived from its successful prosecution, being a product of later years, originating with the descendants of enriched traders.

NATIONALITY.—The original nationality of the citizens generally varied with their locality. In the east coast towns, with the exception of Drogheda and Wexford, the descendants of Danes (known as Ostmen) predominated. Dublin was a purely Danish town until the 12th century, when, having been given to the people of Bristol, they colonised it. The inhabitants of Drogheda were of English extraction; Wexford also, as was to be expected from its situation, was particularly noticeable for retaining the old English dress and idiom. In the south, Cork had received and absorbed a number of Danish rovers; while Limerick owed its importance to English settlers, though the names of some of the early chief magistrates are distinctly Anglo-Irish. Galway city, though originally founded by Danes, was peopled by citizens whose names denoted English extraction; and was peculiar in having in addition to the usual laws against

the mere Irish one decreeing that "neither O nor Mac strut nor swagger through the streets."¹

Stringent regulations were in force in many of the towns prohibiting the mere Irish from entering them, places outside the walls being appropriated, where they might remain or conduct business. In most cases these places, known as "Irishtown," are now within the bounds of the cities, a circumstance assisting to give some idea of the actual area formerly occupied by the towns.

EFFECT OF EXCLUSIVENESS.—Distrust or dislike so openly shown was not calculated to promote good feeling, consequently there are frequent references in the annals of the cities to the "wild Irish" swooping down on them. Dublin, owing to its proximity to the Wicklow hills, the homes of the O'Tooles and O'Byrnes, suffered severely from raids. On one occasion the Queen's Exchequer, situated without the east gate, having been plundered by a party of these septs. Similar feelings limited the movements of other townspeople; for the Mayor of Cork at the end of the century gave as a reason for the absence of means of conveyance from that city, that "the citizens durst not travel abroad."

The Irish were not always the foe most dreaded by the townsmen. During the continuous warfare of Elizabeth's reign the exactions of friends did almost as much damage as the attacks of foes. Between them both some of the cities experienced vicissitudes that now appear incredible. Armagh, for instance,

¹ Hardiman.

was alternately occupied and ravaged by Royalists or Irish on five occasions within a space of forty years. Other walled towns escaped a like fate only through having been so devastated at first that there was neither object to be gained nor loss to be inflicted by re-occupying them again.

Towns that through their position or strength were free from molestation by the Irishry were liable to attack from other enemies. The year the Armada was destroyed a Spanish force committed great depredations in Waterford and Wexford.

WALLED TOWNS.—Forty-three walled cities and towns were scattered throughout Elizabethan Ireland, all of them built with a view of resisting prolonged attacks, as well as sudden raids. The seaport towns, the most important, usually had the quay guarded by a mole and small castle for protection against foreign as well as local pirates, Moorish pirates not unfrequently landing and carrying off some of the inhabitants. On the landward side of the maritime towns, and encircling the inland ones, were masonry walls of unwrought stone having at intervals splayed bottom towers, and embrasures for the defenders to fire from. One or more massive gates, generally decorated with the heads and quarters of Irish enemies, were common to all the towns, and in close proximity to the gates stout permanent gallows, seldom without occupants. Within the walls there was usually but one open space, from an idea the more circumscribed the area, providing trade facilities sufficed, so much the less to defend. The streets were narrow

and dark, the houses constructed with thick strong walls of wood, faced with rubble, or mud and lath, and pierced with narrow windows, not at all unlike the houses of the inferior Irish gentry. In some English towns, and others which owed their importance to early English settlers, wooden framework houses were coming into use.

Waterford was said to be properly built and very compact, somewhat close by reason of its thick buildings and narrow streets. Limerick—embracing a circuit of three miles within the walls—sumptuous and substantial. According to Camden, Galway was handsomely built of hewn stone; a city of most perfect beauty containing many elegant stone houses, displaying over their carved doorways the armorial bearings of its proud merchant princes. And Athenry, before its destruction by the Burkes, was said by Sir Henry Sidney to be as large as Calais.

The prefix “ath,” a ford, indicates both the origin and importance formerly of the towns in whose name it appears. The permanent fords usually being of military value were commanded by a fort or castle, round which, as a nucleus, the town sprang up. The prospect of protection guaranteed by the landward castles and forts (Dun or Lis) also accounts for the foundation of several inland towns. But generally, the proximity of abbeys or other ecclesiastical buildings (Kil) furnished the motive for the erection of most towns and cities. Many of the inland towns like Kilkenny and Kilmallock were of relatively great importance and size, substantially built, and well

populated; forming in times of peace centres of commerce and in war places of refuge. Though towns were not so numerous as at present, the elimination from their number of those through their names presumed to be of English origin would not give us the exact number, many towns at the period not having exchanged their ancient native appellations.

The relative importance of the towns differed from what we are accustomed to. Waterford, at the time, engrossed the bulk of the English trade; Limerick and Galway that with Spain. Of the latter it was said that no town in the three nations (London excepted) was more considerable for commerce.² Cork was smaller than either of these cities, and Dublin was reckoned inferior, in an official sense, to Armagh, until the reign of Elizabeth, when the seat of government was permanently fixed there; a proceeding which incidentally disposed of the claim of Drogheda to be considered the most important town in the Kingdom. Waterford and Dungannon also were important centres of traffic with England, through Bristol, and with France and Spain.

TRADE.—Burdensome as the necessary military precautions, and the administrative restrictions upon commerce with the Irish, must have proved, and notwithstanding they were forced to pay certain dues to the neighbouring chiefs upon goods from their districts, the trade of the towns must have been considerable in amount and constant in volume, otherwise they would not have contrived to grow wealthy and proud.

² H. Cromwell.

An incidental proof of their prosperity is manifest in the numerous inns within their walls. All of them well equipped and capable of ministering to the wants of groups of traders (travelling in company for safety) parties of soldiers, or the retinues of noblemen.

The bulk of the trade was foreign, and was carried on by the towns in their own ships, the towns on the east coast, known as the Queen's cinque ports of Ireland, being credited with possessing a great number of vessels.

Commerce was not the only purpose for which the maritime towns maintained ships. Limerick and Galway carried on for years an intermittent naval war. Waterford, likewise, in retaliation for the plundering of one of their ships at Baltimore, many years previously, indulged in naval hostilities with the reputed plunderer, a southern chief, and eventually defeated him. An incident of their warfare was a determined attack on Waterford itself by the chief and a degenerate Anglo-Irish family.

Part of the trade upon which the maritime towns flourished would now be described as blockade running. On several occasions Galway and other towns were accused of fitting out ships for the purpose (in defiance of the Queen's vessels) of supplying the Munster rebels with powder and other munitions.

At this time Dublin was noted for the quality and sale of its malt liquor; said to be the most vendible of merchandise, the whole profit of the town depending upon that, and the quantities of native usquebagh and foreign wines sold. From Moryson remarking that at that time the Irish used neither malt nor hops,

we must suppose the inhabitants of Dublin were unaware of the native process and materials used in manufacturing whiskey.

Occasionally the Privy Council, with a view to suppress or localise an insurrection, enforced the Statute³ rendering penal the vending of merchandise to the Irish. Traffic in corn, specially, was frequently hampered by all sorts of restrictions. Later, to assist the process of devastation, the authorities prohibited the English of the Pale selling corn to the Irish at all.

Against this tendency of the Government to interfere with trade in furtherance of political objects, the corporate towns had some protection in their charters, but the market towns were quite at their mercy: complaints, which were frequent, proving useless. In addition to the regulations affecting the traffic in corn, others forbade the sale or purchase of horses or cattle, except during stated hours and at appointed places. Others again, were devised to promote trade in rather an arbitrary manner, such as that forbidding the payment of foreign merchants in specie, unless they agreed to expend the amount in the purchase of other goods in the same town. One of the few instances in which government interference proved beneficial to trade was the establishing shipwrights at Belfast. The accessibility to England, and proximity to Carrickfergus—a military stronghold and magazine—probably influenced Sir John Perrott in the selection.

³ 10th Henry VI.

That monetary transactions between the town capitalists and the Irish gentry of the period were not unknown, is evident from a Limerick merchant having been forcibly dispossessed of a castle he had seized in security for a loan to one Teig MacMahon, thus losing pledge and loan.

The difficulty and danger attendant upon recovering a debt from an Irishman, beyond the town precincts led to the introduction of a law permitting a creditor if English, to personally seize the goods of *any* Irishman found within, or passing through, the town. Naturally this led to retaliation.

THE COINAGE.—Another much discussed measure amongst the Elizabethan townsmen was the condition of the coinage.

In 1543, the Lord Deputy complained to his Sovereign of the almost total absence from the country of sterling money. To remedy the deficiency a Mint was established in Dublin, but in a few years had to be closed for want of available material.

Year after year, though trade increased, the scarcity of circulating coin continued, and became an intolerable burden. Rents, the consideration for mortgages, and other payments usually made in ready money, were again being paid in kind, and nearly all trade was carried on by a process of bartering.

In England also the currency had been taken in hand, and the brilliant, though unscrupulous idea, was conceived of removing the scarcity of money in Ireland by the wholesale importation of English base,

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to be true and faithful servants of the cities in their locality, the citizens preferred to undertake their own defence, not trusting the neighbouring notables nor desiring to be burdened with an English garrison. On one occasion Limerick proved an exception to this rule, for, being threatened with an Irish garrison the citizens forwarded a request for English soldiers, on the ground that the Irish were addicted to quarrelling and other misdemeanours. As the city maintained a well-armed force a thousand strong, a number greater than either Cork or Waterford, this request was considered to be prompted by hopes of increased trade, not dictated by fears for the safety of their city.

When thus practically compelled to arm for their own defence, the towns frequently found the temptation of employing these arms too strong to resist, and waged private war on their own account.

That the policy of non-interference had its limits was experienced by a Mayor of Dublin, for, having neglected the Lord Deputy's order to provide corn for the garrison, he was ordered to make good the default, and fined £100 (Irish). The punishment was remitted upon the Mayor, Aldermen, and the rest of the co-brethren, making submission—on their knees—to the Council.

Dublin was not the only city that showed signs of contumacy. The Corporation of Cork incurred the displeasure of the Lord Deputy for not providing the accommodation considered suitable to his position as representative of the sovereign when he visited their the river-girt city. Waterford also, forgetful of its former

loyalty ; rewarded by Henry VIII. with a present of a gilt sword and hat for its chief magistrate ; obstinately declined to carry out orders of the Council. Galling as this must have been to the Council, not at all inclined to acquiesce meekly in such treatment, the relations between governors and governed, where the latter consisted of an Anglo-Irish community, is well illustrated by the inability of the former to do more than order the Mayor and four of the most substantial Aldermen to appear (on their knees, we presume), and answer for their conduct at Dublin. Whatever the result of the interview, there was certainly no increase of loyalty, for some time later the Waterford officials were accused of suppressing letters and other material facts of treason obtained from a captured ship brought into their harbour. ⁵

That in other towns, besides the important ones mentioned, there were residents not well disposed to the Queen's Government is the only construction to be placed on the order directing none of the inhabitants of the port towns to have armour and weapons unless they shall be considered faithful and loyal. ⁶

In strong contrast to the other maritime towns during the last quarter of the century, Limerick was greatly renowned for loyalty to the English interest, and received its reward in being selected for the headquarters of the Royalist army, during the Desmond rebellion.

DAILY LIFE.—Existence in the walled towns must have been dull and monotonous to a degree. There was

⁵ Halliday MSS. ⁶ Hatfield MSS.

danger, even had there been any object, in leaving the shelter of the walls, so that the townspeople were thrown upon the internal resources of their towns for whatever amusements they indulged in. One constant source of excitement in small municipalities was denied them through the control of local affairs continuing year after year in the same families. Amusements, in the modern sense, are very seldom mentioned. Religious observances, and a varying amount of political and polemical discussion, supplied their place. Though the art of printing, lately introduced, was far from common, some of the towns, notably Dublin, poured forth a ceaseless stream of religious and political tracts, and participated to some extent in the intellectual activity prevalent in England. Waterford, particularly, owing to its constant communication with the West country, and importation of printed matter, was quite famous for the literary acquirements of its citizens.

In the border and inland towns the incursions of raiding parties, and robberies of Irish thieves, occasionally varied the monotony. Of the former there was usually some premonition, and a stout defence offered to their attempts. The daring and resource marking the robberies by individuals or small parties may be seen from the case of Cork, from whence all the horses of any value in the city had been stolen. When success crowned these attempts the townsman lost his goods. When unsuccessful, the thieves' heads presently figured on the gate, formalities of law where the "mere" Irish were concerned not being necessary.

The frequency and virulence of the plagues which

devastated the towns, attributable to their confined areas and primitive sanitary arrangements, was a noticeable feature in their annals also. In the year 1575 Dublin was so depopulated by one of these visitations that, owing to the length of time commerce was suspended, grass grew in the streets and doorways.

Characteristic of the Irish towns at the period was the extraordinary alacrity with which they voluntarily furnished armed contingents, under their mayors or sovereigns, to the numerous expeditions of the Lord Deputies. Whether this practice originated in national pugnacity, town rivalry, or as a means of obtaining honours for their leaders, we are without means to accurately determine. But there can be no question, trade must have languished during the period when these absences became almost continuous. For Drogheda to furnish seven hundred men to one expedition, unless in a case of national emergency, must have entailed a cessation of some trade activity, or indicates a disproportionate number of unemployed in the urban population.

DRESS. — Owing to the comparatively affluent circumstances of the citizens, their dress and style of living was said to be much superior to that of the rural settlers, and to most of the Irish.

Townsmen of all ranks adhered to English fashions in costume. Their women, while handsomely dressing in the same fashion, did not disdain when beyond their own dwellings to wear rich and costly mantles of Irish rug, shaped after the Irish fashion, having a

large, handsome fringe encircling the neck, and bordered by thick fringe reaching to the feet.

The use of coal, though esteemed a great luxury, was becoming common in the seaport towns. Many articles now imported were then grown or made in Ireland, and as the balance of trade was in favour of the Irish merchants, coal formed a convenient return cargo.

Noticeable in the local feeling of the towns was the little favour with which the townswomen looked upon the Irish or those of mixed descent. Even when born in Ireland, the pride of the women in their English extraction formed a distinct contrast to that entertained by those whose opportunities for intercourse were less restricted.

CHANGE IN RELIGIOUS FEELING.—What centuries of mutual intercourse had not effected, the profession in common of a prescribed religion accomplished. Towards the end of the century the hostile feeling of the townspeople against the Irish began to wane.

During the pacification of Munster, complaint was made that the cities and walled towns were so besotted and bewitched with Popish priests, Jesuits, and seminaries, that for fear of their cursings and excommunications they were ready upon every small occasion to rise in arms against the English, and minister aid and succour unto the Irish. One instance cited was that of the Corporation of Limerick, while professing loyalty to the English officials, sending out wines to the camp of the "Sugau"⁷ Earl of Desmond. By

⁷ *i.e.*, Pretender, with some show of disputable right.

some, this duplicity was attributed, not to any change of disposition, but to a desire to retain the advantages derived from secret sales of commodities at excessive rates.

That there was a change, the extent of it, and that it arose from religious considerations, will be understood by contrasting the attitude of the towns during different periods. During the Marian persecution, numbers of well-to-do English Protestants flocked over for safety to the larger Irish towns. So cordial was their reception—Dublin alone, at the expense of the city, opened some seventy houses for them—that the majority, when the danger had passed, remained in Ireland. Less than forty years afterwards the Sheriff of Waterford reported that only himself and two others attended the Reformed services, and the Protestant Archbishop of Cork complained to the Lord Deputy that the boys in the Cork Grammar School had torn out of their books the leaf containing the Queen's titles, including "Defender of the Faith."

The transient success of the Reformed doctrines in the towns has been ascribed to ignorance of the points in dispute, and absence of instruction in the old faith owing to the priests and friars having been banished; a precautionary measure more easily enforced in the towns than in the districts where Irish control had to be reckoned with. Though these factors were not without their share of influence, the constant spectacle in the confined spaces of towns of religious edifices diverted from their former daily use; the absence of accustomed intercourse with members of religious orders; and the influence of the wives and daughters of

the citizens, also contributed to the undoubted change which came over the towns. Another likely factor was the openly irregular behaviour of the clergy under the new dispensation. Spenser describes them as guilty of gross simony, greedy covetousness, fleshly incontinency, and generally all disordered life, and contrasted them unfavourably with the rank and file of the deprived priests. A contrast all the more conspicuous in the confined town areas, when we remember the latter were undergoing the improving process inseparable from oppression, no matter how thinly veiled.

Dublin remained to some extent an exception to this change of views, a circumstance due probably to the presence of the governing powers, and the strictness with which the repressive measures against the old form of worship were carried out within her walls. To Dublin belongs the distinction of being the first place in Ireland where the liturgy was read in English.

Immediately after the death of the Queen the principal places in Munster defiantly returned to the open profession of Catholicism, and had to be proceeded against. This action of some, and that of other towns in adhering to the Catholicism of their fathers, raises a doubt of the accuracy of the contention that the maintenance of monasteries and other religious foundations was inconsistent with, or rather retarded, the natural development of commerce and social liberty, as they then began to be understood. Outside the towns there was but little commerce; while in the towns the fierce manners and independence of their

inhabitants would have immediately resented any restraint upon trade or social freedom.

EFFECTS OF THE WARS.—During the protracted wars and commotions many of the towns, cut off from regular external communication and assistance, had their populations seriously depleted through numbers of the citizens having fallen in battle or perished from the unaccustomed rigours of campaigning. Of others, many of the townsmen, with their families, had taken refuge in towns that, like Cork, were held strongly for the Crown, while those, unfortunately, condemned to remain through many an anxious month were reduced to great straits. In other towns, owing to the number of men with the Royalist forces, trade had practically ceased; and the prospect of any improvement grew more remote through the ill success of the Royalist arms. Reduced in circumstances, hopeless of the future, numbers of townspeople, forfeiting property and prospects, attempted to obtain in England the peace and shelter denied in what, to many of them, was their native country.

Thus impoverished in population and resources, several towns lost the spirit or means to maintain former privileges or recover recent positions. The spirit of rivalry and enterprise which had formerly distinguished them disappeared; and they entered on a premature old age of decay; until, on the conclusion of the last rumblings of the storm which had wrecked their trade and transformed their social aspect, it was no mere figure of speech that described the majority of the Irish towns as but the memories of former security and wealth.

LAWS AND SOCIETY.

TO the student of Irish history of any period the advantage of some knowledge of the ancient Gaelic system of jurisprudence, generally known as the Brehon laws, and the social system of which they were the reflection, cannot be over-estimated. Without it, much that appears inconsistent in the national character is misunderstood, and hereditary traits and tendencies, owing their formation to the principles inculcated by them, are attributed to other causes.

To the linguistic difficulty formerly, but erroneously, believed to be connected with their study, and the contemptuous treatment systematically accorded everything Irish, must be attributed the want of attention the subject has hitherto received. Now, that by the labours of a small body of enthusiasts, principally foreigners, the wealth of instructive material hidden in the archaic phrases of these ancient laws is being placed at the disposal of native and stranger alike, sociologists and historians are beginning to recognise their value and indispensability, and politicians to realise that obsolete though both laws and society have been for so long, they still influence the ideas and aspirations of the descendants of those they once dominated.

Our interest in these Brehon laws arises from their representing and reflecting the Gaelic conception of

the duties and responsibilities of all classes of men to their fellows, family, and state, thereby enabling us, by contrast with the more modern system they were suffering displacement from during the 16th century, to appreciate the strength of Gaelic antagonism to that system. Moreover, as it is evident from the scope and complexity of these ancient laws that they were evolved for the use of a number of free and equal communities composed of all the classes essential to civil polity, they form an indisputable refutation of the once common belief that previous to the Norman invasion the inhabitants of Ireland had neither political nor social system. Their whole tenour, furthermore, suggests the improbability of a people living under their protection and amenable to their restrictions being the nation of savages the exigencies of rhyme, or the animus of prose, in some contemporary writings would lead us to believe.

For 250 years before the Brehon laws finally ceased to be a power in the land they had been proscribed by the English. Yet in defiance of prohibitions, not only were they openly complied with in the native districts and clandestinely in the Pale and districts under English control, but the royal Ministers did not scruple to utilise them occasionally. As late as the year 1543 the Irish Privy Council enjoined their observance in a dispute concerning a district in Tipperary.¹ A few years later, during some litigation known as the O'Carroll's case, the Brehons, or native judges, were directly ordered to arbitrate.² Later

¹ P. C. Order, 14th July.

² P. C. Order, August, 1558.

again, Spenser records that he frequently saw crowds assembled in the vicinity of a Brehon stone or tree to hear judgments pronounced in accordance with the ancient laws, and how much impressed he was by the combination of justice and equity shown in the decisions, and the orderly manner in which the chiefs and their numerous retinues wended their way down the hill-sides on the conclusion of a case.

If there was one word that in itself was sufficient to rouse English officials to anger that word was "tanistry." The word and all it meant was anathema. Still, we find the Irish Privy Council adjudicating upon and supporting the institution comprehended in the term "tanistry" in connection with the O'Farrells.³

Notwithstanding these and other instances of toleration, there can be no question that it was the constant desire of English officials to remove all trace of former laws and social system. To them, native views of the relations between the Crown and its subjects, their lives, liberties, and properties, were not only foreign, they were pernicious in their effect and demoralising in their tendencies, deserving to be eradicated like a noxious weed.

In other chapters the area of English domination, and its ability to give effect to official inclinations by enforcing whatever law they considered suitable to the natives, has been defined. Though differences of opinion may exist as to the exact limits of this ascendancy, it is undeniable that before the final suppression of armed resistance on a large scale the

³ Halliday MSS., page 70.

ancient system, modified or corrupted through contact with English customs and ideas, was in operation over a considerable part of the island.

BREHON LAW.—Though in the Irish cosmos there was no regular continuous system of judicial terms for the administration of justice, or class of functionaries other than the judges connected with this administration, justice, both civil and criminal, was free and within the reach of all, at all times and at certain well-known places, subject only to the necessity of women, minors, and certain of the lower classes suing by their relatives or chiefs. Further, though there was no machinery for putting the law in motion against criminals (that had to be done by the aggrieved person) the devolution of responsibility or suretyship in the various divisions of society was so complete that, except infrequently, there could be no difficulty in tracing or bringing to book a culprit.

Capital offences could be, but were not usually, punished with death; a fine, varying in amount with the position of the offender—in the case of murder known as an *eric*—being more frequently substituted. Other offences entailed fines similarly varied also.

Whenever the perpetration of an offence carries with it an unusually harsh punishment, or one not in conformity with the usual spirit of the law, it is safe to infer the offence itself is considered particularly heinous or is unusually prevalent. The wilful disturbance of any national or local assembly was punished by the ancient Irish by death. No appeal was admitted.

In apportioning punishment, the circumstances of the crime, the loss or damage caused, and the status of both the offender and complainant, were considered. For similar offences a person of rank was punished more severely than one of lower position. Clerics were punished more severely than any other class, in that they were unable to recover their position. Similarly, offences against the property of the poor, and offences against the person, entailed heavier punishment than offences against the property of the rich, or than where property only was concerned. Offences against women, though far from common, appear to have been instantly and savagely punished by or at the instance of the male relatives. Satire and calumny were included in the list of offences.

The person against whom an offence had been committed summoned the offender before a judge, who, on proof being given, assessed the fine to be paid. If this was not paid through the offender not having sufficient to satisfy it, or absconding, the immediate relatives, then the family, then the sept, were held responsible for the amount.

In the case of an habitual criminal the relatives could determine their responsibility by expelling him and lodging security against further malpractices. If after expulsion the criminal returned and committed other crimes he was liable to be slain on sight.

A characteristic of the criminal law was its minuteness and forethought. Nothing that could possibly affect the damage or remedy appears to have escaped consideration.

Civil law, as distinct from disputes concerning land, was much less important. The great use of, and respect for, sureties, with payment in kind, and a system of barter (very slightly modified by the use of coined money and precious metals) for the exchange of merchandise, reduced to a minimum the liability or necessity for litigation.

Laws relating to contracts were numerous and important. One peculiarity of them was that a witness, as such, incurred the liability of a surety. Contracts were set aside with difficulty once the requisite safeguards were complied with.

The importance of distrains may be imagined, in a system where every offence, civil or criminal, had its punishment in a fine recoverable by distress. Any attempt at evasion of distress, or over seizure by the person distraining, was in itself punishable, and every means had to be taken to ensure the process was not converted into persecution.

Great care was taken to protect the rights of women and minors, the assumption being that they were in a condition of subjection. Married women possessed a certain freedom with regard to contracts, and in case of a separation the return of their property was ensured them. Daughters could not participate in the division of parental property, except in the case of a great inequality of sons and daughters, then the latters' husbands were admitted to a share as if they had shared as sons. With a view to perpetuate the family name and defend property, illegitimate sons were preferred to legitimate daughters. A peculiar

feature, throwing a light upon the relation between the sexes, was that no provision existed inferring the possibility of unmarried women after a certain age, except as widows. Another, in connection with minors, was that on attaining a certain age they were credited with possessing half sense.

In the weighing of evidence more importance was attached to the rank of the witness than to the matter of his testimony, that of a chief having more weight than that of any other witness, unless they were of the religious or learned orders.

LAND LAWS.—Possession of the land was the primary cause of all the troubles of the sixteenth century. Religion, foreign affairs, and other points of dispute were but screens, hiding on one side a land hunger, phenomenal at the time, but since recognised under a more euphonious name as inseparable from English expansion. On the other, an attachment to the soil which centuries of usage and customs founded upon its possession had rendered ineradicable.

Originally the whole of the territory or district in which the clan was located belonged to the clan, the different septs having each their own portion. There was no private ownership; the land being more a commodity than a possession, and public claims overriding the claim of the individual. This was the theory. In practice, for a considerable period before the sixteenth century, long-continued possession or occupation constituted a title. In the Irish districts, and to some extent in those recently recovered, titles

to landed property other than prescriptive were practically unknown.

For convenience of definition, the dues or tribute rendered for land is usually termed rent; but, in the English sense of the word, rent was unknown to Gaelic land tenure. Tribute for land was paid in various ways. The farmer paid in kind, the artisan might exchange his goods, and the cottier and his class pay by manual labour. Even though the tribute remained unpaid, fixity of tenure was assured to all, the remedy being distraint. Land could seldom be the subject of dispute, for all contracts concerning it had to receive the sanction of the sept and be entered into before a specially appointed official. Neither could it be seized or sold for the debts of the owner or occupier.

In short, the whole system was illustrative of conditions where a number of pastoral, self-supporting, and exclusive communities, availing themselves of but little specie or metallic currency, naturally retained their principal means of existence under popular control.

Imperfect as this brief summary of the Brehon laws necessarily is, it enables us to appraise the value of the claim that the strongest testimony to the justice of the principles and sympathy with right characterising them may be found in the tendency of modern law-making to resuscitate and apply some of them to modern conditions. And, were any other proof of their excellence required, we find it furnished by their animating principle, the bond or surety, having been

claimed as determining the first rude form of English justice, and their system of land tenure, as that in vogue with the Anglo-Saxons.

To pretend that this ancient legal system was without defect or blemish would be to claim for it a more than human origin. To assert that a people whose daily lives were governed by it were savages betrays both ignorance and animosity. If a nation's laws are the reflex of the national character, then, indeed, the Irish have every reason to be proud of their ancestors.

SOCIETY.—The complex system of society which existed in Ireland before the adoption or enforcement of English law and custom had its origin in relationship, that being the cement which bound the large and small stones forming the social edifice together. Each clan consisted of a number of septs, and each sept of a collection of what, for want of a better definition, must be termed families, the family being the real social and legal unit.

The sept, therefore, might contain or be comprised of any number of families, all related, and all, in common with the other septs forming the clan, claiming descent from one ancestor. The system admitted of modification so far that strangers settling in the clan territory were, after a probationary period, recognised as members of the clan, or became so by adoption. It was possible also for a clansman, with his own chief's consent, to become the liege of another chief and be naturalised in the other sept.

Thus constituted and within its own territory,

delimited by natural boundaries or the fortune of war, the septs formed a clan possessing some of the characteristics of a small State, claiming to be autonomous in every respect, appointing its own chiefs and officials, lay and ecclesiastical, and having its own assemblies for the transaction of ordinary business.

Sometimes two or three clans that were nearly related acknowledged but one chief, but usually every clan had its own head. These chiefs were subordinate to a provincial king, to whom the clan chiefs paid tribute and owed allegiance, both strictly regulated and the particulars set out in a book known as the "Psalter of Tara."

Next, but at a distance, in social importance to kinship came the possession of property; for it was possible by wealth to obtain a higher status or degree of rank. But no amount of property would assist an individual to become a noble unless such property had been in the family's possession for three generations. On the other hand, loss of wealth usually involved loss of status also. The commission of particularly heinous crimes, or cowardice in the field, had the same result.

The importance of status or rank and social position, to the individual, and the necessity for carefully defining and guarding it, arose from it being the factor which determined his acts and defaults, rights and liabilities, regulated his honour price, and was the criterion of his reliability as a witness.

In opportunities for social advancement and the acquisition of rank, the old Irish differed considerably

from their northern neighbours. With the Irish the sword was not the sole dispenser of rank and honour. The professions: law, medicine, and music—owing to the esteem in which they were held and the many members of noble families entering them—conferred on their professors a higher status than birth or wealth alone could give. A status which could only be alternatively obtained through the performance of some great public service or act of conspicuous valour.

Inasmuch as all the ranks did not possess full rights, the injustice or disability likely to ensue was remedied by a system peculiar and characteristic; the combining to form a society or fraternity to jointly acquire the qualifying property.

Theoretically the community consisted of six ranks or classes; from the king or chief to the menials or labourers known to the English as "churls."

KING.—The office of king or chief of any degree was within certain limits elective, but custom restricted the election to one family. In some instances, in the case of superior kings or chiefs, to two families taken alternately, but not to any particular member of the family. Whenever the Tanist system was strictly observed, though the reigning chief might have sons, his next eldest brother, or, failing brothers, the next collateral eldest cousin of the blood, succeeded. The Tanist, literally heir elect, though during the 16th century it was used to denote the chief actually elected by ancient methods, was chosen at the same time as the chief. On the death of the latter the

Tanist at once assumed the office, and a new successor was elected.

Formerly at these elections all the males of the clan were entitled to vote. Later, in the case of superior chiefs, the elective power passed wholly into the hands of the nobles, lay and ecclesiastical.

The ceremony of inauguration, partly religious and partly civil, took place in the vicinity of a particular stone situated on a hill top; and was concluded by placing the candidate on the stone and administering various oaths to him, the most important—that he would not divert the succession from the Tanist. He was then given a white wand, and hailed as *the O'Neill*, or whatever the tribal name might be. At the same time the Tanist took similar oaths, and was also inducted. Some of the details of these ceremonies with which Geraldus Cambrensis sullied his pages were without foundation; the offspring of a too vivid and not over clean imagination.

Although, previous to election, the chief must have possessed some property, a further portion of land and various tributes and dues were appropriated to the maintenance of his position. In the land he nominally had a life interest only; a mode of tenure which proved a perpetual stumbling block to the English rulers. Literally acted upon, there could be neither forfeiture for the life tenant's treason, sequestration in satisfaction of a mortgage, nor alienation for any purpose whatsoever.

Contact with the rival system, and the working of the policy of fomenting dissension, brought to light,

in addition to the land difficulty, other evils resulting from this principle of election. Once the strict letter of the law had been departed from, possible candidates were quick to discern the feasibility of influencing or compelling election by a display of force. For this purpose numbers of armed men—"idle men of war" as Lord Sussex termed them—were maintained, the practice becoming in time not the least of the evils from which the country suffered.

NOBLES.—The chief nobles, the rank from which the chiefs of clans were elected, were the rulers and representatives of septs, and took rank amongst themselves. Originally, in common with the other chiefs, they required similar qualifications, were elected on similar principles, and provided, as the kings were. Previous to the 16th century the rule of succession had been occasionally varied in favour of the hereditary principle. At the same time the land pertaining to their dignities, from having been so long vested in one family, had come to be considered private property.

As English supremacy spread and became permanent, the relative importance—founded on the numbers of clansmen paying tribute—of the Irish nobles experienced considerable variations. With the exception of a few families like the O'Neills in the north, and MacCarthys in the south, such rank and standing as they retained was based upon English titles or recognition, a contemning of the old order readily promoted or connived at by English officials, but not received with favour by the majority of the native Irish.

PROFESSIONAL CLASS.—This included Brehons or Judges ; Ollamhs or professors of law, history, and philosophy, language, music, poetry, and recitation in prose and verse ; physicians, priests, and musicians.

In course of time the Judges had become the custodians as well as exponents of the law. They were usually retained by the chief, and acted for districts or clans, were paid by fees included in their awards, and liable for errors of judgment.

Similarly the Ollamhs (pronounced Ollav) or professors of law, and from whose ranks were chosen the Brehons, had become advocates and solicitors, as we would now term them. As historians, genealogists, and literary men, they were bound to make themselves perfect masters of history, and to teach it by public recitals. In the matter of kinship alone their knowledge and accuracy was of the greatest importance and consequence. Long before their final disappearance from the national life the majority of these Ollamhs had discarded many of their official duties and concentrated their attention on the musical portion of them. As Bards they incurred the persistent hostility of the English officials, an attitude rendering their continued existence impossible, even had they survived the fall of the system from which they derived their importance and functions.

The absence of any direct mention of clerical ranks and duties was due probably to the druidical priesthood having originally formed part of the official hierarchy. On their removal the Christian teachers succeeded to any rights or privileges compatible with their creed,

without in any way abating those due to their priestly offices, thus completely sweeping away the old order as far as the clergy were concerned. The quarrel between Rome and the English Government put the clergy in a position unknown to native law and foreign to native customs.

ARTIZANS AND MECHANICS. — Formerly these classes had been restricted to the districts they were connected with by ties of relationship, in other respects they were free and uncontrolled ; occupied a recognised position ; contributed their share of the clan burdens and military service ; could make their own terms of employment, and were generally well to do. An anomaly originally connected with these classes was that their rank among themselves was determined by the rank of their employers. Intended to mark the esteem in which rank was held, this custom had in practice the effect of making the least useful handicraft—that gratifying the taste of the rich only—the most considered.

In the 16th century the customary restrictions upon the movements of these workers was in process of removal. The inducements offered to workmen of all descriptions in the towns and newly recovered districts, combined with the unsettled state of the country, proved stronger than custom or fear of disapprobation, and led to a partial disappearance from the country districts of the best class of workmen : an important movement, as it included the severance of their dependence upon local or particular connexions.

FARMERS.—As the welfare of every portion of

the community was dependent upon agriculture and husbandry, the class directly connected with these pursuits was of considerable importance in the social scale. From it the greater part of the tribute was received, and the bulk of the clan fighting forces recruited.

Under the native system the privileges and exemptions of this class were numerous, and included the right to a share in the clan land, to graze cattle and swine upon the common land, and to hire cattle from their chief without security. Should their share of tribute be unpaid they could not be evicted from the land they held, nor deprived of their share in the common land. They were, on the other hand, liable to various demands connected with the maintenance of chiefs and soldiers. The most burdensome were: Supporting the chief for certain periods on his yearly visit, or providing a sum of money for his spending and refection; maintaining his retinue (practically all the able-bodied men of the immediate district); attending the rising out or muster, armed and provisioned; and defraying the wages and keep of the chief's workmen. Elastic in their nature and liable to abuse as these demands were, their mode of collection and disposal appeared so much in agreement with the national disposition that the class most affected were the last to object to them. Even in the Pale and districts where English officials and juries continually endeavoured to abolish or restrict these imposts, the farmers were willing to render, and the landed proprietors to receive, them.

Another curious illustration of the distinction

considered to be conferred by birth and property characterised the two sections into which the farming class were, according to the value of their possessions, divided. For, although a member of the inferior division might by misfortune or neglect have lost property, it did not follow that he sank into the next lower class. Whether he did so, or retained the rights acquired at his birth, in hopes of better days, was a matter of choice for himself.

CHURLS.—The lowest class in Irish society consisted of the cottiers or labourers, followers and servants of the nobles and gentry, and a nondescript class belonging to no clan or district. They were without legal rights or privileges, except that the cottiers could hire land and pay for it by manual labour, were compelled to reside on the clan chief's land, and liable in person to seizure and enforced labour for the benefit of the public or nobles, or in satisfaction of penalties incurred. The lowest grade in this class was usually recruited from criminals, and those who had forfeited their status. They could neither obtain reparation for murder of relatives, inherit property, nor bear arms. In the confusion of law and custom existing in the border and recently annexed districts this class profited most of all, and in theory attained a position hitherto denied them.

Such, briefly, was the legal system and social organization the Elizabethan Irish, in the parts and to the extent already indicated, were accustomed to. The impossibility of assimilating either system or organization to English methods is obvious.

That the Norman-Irish nobles preferred the Brehon law, and enforced its observance, is not surprising. Their deference began and ended with the privileges, and ignored the duties and liabilities. By a judicious mixture of both systems and customs they managed to become absolute owners of large estates, and practically independent territorial magnates. So much so, that in Henry VIII.'s time about thirty of them observed the Brehon system, including the capacity to make war and peace at pleasure.

That the Irish chiefs and people were usually willing to risk everything for the old order, was due to the fact that in the majority of cases the only right and title they could show to whatever they possessed was derived from its laws and sanctioned by its customs. The O'Connors and O'Morras were not alone in their experiences. There were bitter enemies of the new order within the Pale as well as without it.

LEGAL STATUS.—In the parts of the Island where English arms were able to enforce English law, an Irishman (unless belonging to the five bloods) who had made legal submission, and been received into allegiance, could no longer be murdered with impunity; for the murder was punishable by a small pecuniary fine.⁴ But he still laboured under restrictions which practically made him a pariah in his native country. Even though he were lord or captain of the Irish, it was high treason to foster any of the children of those⁵ who, having in the majority of cases come into the country as adventurers, now posed as lords of it.

⁴ O'Connell.

⁵ 11th Elizabeth, 1569.

Though his women were allowed to marry with the English, he was forbidden to do so under the severest penalties.⁶ His most cherished prejudices and sentiments, woven into the pattern of daily life by years of use, were offended and outraged; the manner of wearing his hair, colour of his garments, furniture of horse and horseman, nothing was too small to escape restriction or prohibition. The death penalty, so seldom claimed by the laws his forefathers lived under, had, by the operation of martial law, become the one and only punishment; and the time-honoured custom of restraint, so fenced about with limitations that its legitimate exercise became an act of felony entailing a shameful death.⁷

The dislike to English law this treatment naturally produced was aggravated and confirmed by entrusting its administration to totally unfit and incompetent persons. Of several of these officials the misdeeds are on record, and form a complete justification of the nobles and chiefs who declined to admit them into their territories. They go far also to account, in a people accustomed to and taking pleasure in legal disputations, for the tendency then noted for the first time of complaints of want of fairness, of excessive challenging of jurymen, and—the unfailing accompaniment of venal or capricious justice — attempts to bribe or intimidate the magistracy.

In the Irish districts the inhabitants who were not of English birth or descent, and had not made sub-

⁶ 28th Henry VIII. (1537).

⁷ McMahon's case, Morrison's *History*.

mission, were considered to belong to a nation of perpetual enemies. By English law they could not possess property or rights, or claim security for life or limb.⁸ It was felony, punishable with death, for merchants or others to sell, or send for the purpose of selling, merchandise to them.⁹ In peace or war they were without legal position or shelter, exposed to a penalty beyond recall at the hands of any English subject willing and desirous to obtain a reward for executing the sentence his verdict as jury had prompted himself as judge to command.¹⁰ Fortunately for these Irish, beyond the occasional visits of strongly guarded Commissions of Assize, they were seldom troubled by the inhumanities of the foreign law. When they were, the halting places of the Commission were distinguishable by rows of gibbeted bodies.

The state of practical outlawry which thus hung like a funeral pall over the natives of all ranks and classes (with the exceptions stated) was occasionally lifted. Strange, indeed, if among the throng of officials and authorities there had not been some with a natural perception of justice, or sufficient practical insight to discern the treatment meted out to the Irish was more calculated to intensify than cure the evils it was directed against ; more likely to produce a nation of bandits than peaceful law-abiding citizens. The Elizabethan Irish experienced both classes of rulers ; the just in intention and the unjust by design. Which

⁸ Sir John Davis.

⁹ 10th Henry VI.

¹⁰ Orders in Council.—Elizabeth.

predominated may be inferred from the memorial addressed to the Queen in 1594, by Captain Thomas Lee, wherein the majority of the official and governing classes were said to be more notorious for avarice and cruelty than renowned for impartiality and statesmanship.

To judge, therefore, the national tempers of the Elizabethan Irishry from the English criminal records of the time would be unfair. One legal system was being replaced by another having little or nothing in common with it. The moribund system practically left the peace of a clan or district dependant upon the personal idiosyncracies of the chief or a superior ; consequently many disturbances and actions, apparently due to a wide and inbred spirit of lawlessness, were really the work of individuals. Its rival brooked no interference. To it all attempts at redressing private wrongs by public crimes, whether the simple blood feud or the lordly raid, were not only offences against the queen's peace, they were offences against the law itself.

Only by giving due weight to this difference in the national points of view can we reconcile foreign statements of the lawless condition of the Irish districts with the native assertion that crimes, other than those inseparable from a state of society where every man went armed and had the inclination to right himself, were infrequent. The distinction was aptly expressed when commenting upon the observation of Sir John Davies, Attorney-General to James I. : " For the truth is that in times of peace the Irish are more fearful to offend the law than the English or any other nation whatsoever." English law recognised no state of warfare,

except with the king's enemies: the Irish considered an unfriendly action constituted the doer an enemy.

The successful prosecution of the policy of extending English authority to the uttermost limits of the island led to the final overthrow of the old and the introduction of a new order. But the new conditions meant simply a continuance of the denial of justice and protection the Irish, as such, were liable to—a denial admitted some years later in the statute¹¹ which removed that and all distinctions of race and treatment.

Under any circumstances, the disappearance of the old system was inevitable. English supremacy and Irish laws and customs could not exist together. That the process was distasteful to those affected is conceivable, but sympathy with this feeling or admiration for the native law and system, while permitting regret or resentment at the means employed, must not blind us to the unavoidable necessity of the course pursued by the victors.

Civilization, after all, is largely a matter of environment, and the civilization of the Irish was too unadaptable to modern conditions. That the plasticity of the national temperament did not lend itself readily to complete identification with the new conditions was due principally to the national distrust of the manner in which they would be applied, and hatred of the instruments likely to be employed in the application. Before these feelings were removed, the introduction of other differences served but to deepen them.

¹¹ 11th James I., cap. 5.

INTERNAL FEUDS.

THE impossibility of describing the condition of Ireland from the later mediæval period until the general rebellion in the reign of Queen Elizabeth, without noticing the chronic internecine warfare which usually convulsed the island, has been generally admitted.

By some writers undue prominence has been given to the subject; by others, cause has been mistaken for effect. One set of historians consider the national temperament responsible, and the consequent condition of the country and people the ordinary and only one. Another maintain official policy and governmental mal-administration to be the sole cause. Both contentions present an element of truth sufficient to be misleading if accepted alone.

The disturbed state of Ireland had continued almost uninterruptedly from the Norman invasion, and would, in all human probability, have followed that event had the elements of disorder inherent in the native political system been altogether absent from it. But when the most permanent effect of the invasion was to establish throughout the island a number of military posts and conquered districts, having neither natural nor artificial boundaries, and uncontrolled by, though deriving their power of offence from, beyond sea, so numerous were the actual and potential forces of disorder that even a semblance of peace and order

was, under the circumstances, impossible. The prosecution to a successful issue of two courses only would have ensured harmony, viz., the total expulsion of the invaders or the complete subjugation of the native power.

Neither alternative had taken place. The area of English domination advanced at one time, receded at another, but was never stationary ; at the same time, whatever assimilation of conflicting interests had taken place was in favour of the less stable.

During the four hundred years subsequent to the invasion, the inhabitants of the Irish districts, and to a less extent those of the Pale also, had lived in an atmosphere of anarchy and military violence. The ruling classes had become habituated to consider the sword the final and only arbiter in all disputes. Their followers, daily accustomed to turmoils and commotion, had, in the development of the hereditary fighting instinct, displayed such readiness to undertake, and pleasure in prosecuting, quarrels that their bellicosity was considered a national characteristic.

English statecraft was not slow to perceive the advantage to English rule of a continuation of this anarchic atmosphere : " Let us rather connive at their disorders, for a weak and divided people can never detach themselves from the crown of England," had become a maxim of government, its practical application facilitated by conditions wherein those most concerned possessed the power, and seldom wanted the excuse furnished by mutual injuries and reciprocal devastations, to make war upon each other.

That during the 16th century local and general disturbances attained greater dimensions than before, was due primarily to the circumstance that over and above the policy of fomenting disorder, strenuous endeavours were made to recover the ground lost to English control during the previous century, and secondarily to administrative measures, professedly intended to remedy the internal chaos, aggravating and bringing into prominence its most objectionable features. As when in the case of a disastrous conflagration ordinary measures of extinguishment prove futile, explosion and demolition are resorted to. The religious dispute was but a late phase in the struggle, furnishing an excuse for its prolongation, no doubt.

The inability of Elizabethan ministers and officials to comprehend that any particle of blame attached to them or their predecessors for the discreditable state of the island affords a glaring instance of official obliquity. That their modern apologists have persisted in the same course results from a combination of the exaggerated nationalism which refuses to admit a defect in the treatment of other nations, with the glamour cast by this period over modern thought and sentiment.

INCITEMENTS TO DISORDER.—Disputes involving the right of succession, and the possession of land, were frequent, and under the circumstances inevitable. In the course of them every motive influencing human actions was brought into play, and every aspiration possible to the impetuous temperament of the disputants encouraged by the English officials.

Where no disputes existed they could always be manufactured by the simple expedient of enforcing English law, or supporting claims founded on the native system of Tanistry. Both courses were practised when necessary.

According to Sir Robert Cecil, the Irish were an inconstant and quarrelsome people. In the same letter in which this impeachment of the national character occurs, there are directions for promoting strife between two sets of chiefs by promising the Queen's support to the weakest of each set.¹

Equally productive of dissension were other contemporaneous instances of official interference. The support given the Baron of Dungannon in his claim to the chieftaincy of the O'Neills led to years of disturbance in the north, and ultimately to the death of the rightful chief, Shane O'Neill. To digress for a moment : referring to Shane's assassination, Mr. Froude indulges in the sarcasm that exposing the murdered man's head in the manner usual with the heads of traitors, was a symbol to the Irish world of the fate of Celtic heroes. O'Neill was not considered a hero by his countrymen. His death, moreover, occurred indirectly through the northern chiefs assisting the Lord Deputy, and directly by the sword of a Scoto-Gael, at the instigation of an English captain, Piers : the whole incident savouring more of official aptitude in promoting strife and procuring assassination, than being minatory to the Celts. Later, the Earl of Tyrone, and Turlough O'Neill, were candidates for the same uneasy position.

¹ Life of F. MacCarthy More.

To forward a settlement the Crown furnished both aspirants with English troops.² Ulick and John Burke, sons of the Earl of Clanricard, disputed the succession to the Earldom. The Royal ministers by secret warrant authorised either to slay the other, and John was murdered.³ Hoping to estrange the Munster Irish from the Sugaun Earl of Desmond, James, the son of the previous Earl Gerald, at the request of the Irish Government, was taken from the Tower and sent to Ireland. The scheme might have succeeded had it been conducted in a less parsimonious manner, and the young noble restrained from ostentatiously attending a Protestant service.

Alliances, matrimonial and political, between the nobles, chiefs, and English were frequent. In the interests thus created will be found reasons and motives for many otherwise unaccountable feuds, and lapses from loyalty to the crown, of both nationalities. The Desmonds were allied by marriage to the O'Neills, and were believed to have abetted Shane in his defiance of the Lord Deputy. The warfare between the O'Neills and O'Donnells, if not actually caused, was greatly embittered, by the repudiation of a lady of the latter family, when Shane proposed to marry the half-sister of the Earl of Argyle. Consequent on the alliance with the Earl of Kildare, when that nobleman was a prisoner in England, the O'Connors Faly and the O'Carrolls, joined the foolish young Lord Thomas (Silken Thomas) in his ill-judged attempt to clear his father's character. The defection

² MacGeoghegan.

³ O'Sullivan Beare.

from the English interest of the great Earl of Tyrone has been uniformly attributed by Irish writers to patriotic considerations. Notwithstanding, there are grounds for doubting whether, had his marriage with the Bagenal lady proved more agreeable to her brother, Marshal Bagenal, the course of events at a most momentous period might not have run in a different channel.

THE SCOTS.—The important part played by the Scots in the quarrels and dissensions of chiefs and nobles, as well as in producing and fomenting dissatisfaction with the Queen's government, has hardly received the attention it merits. In Lord Sussex's instructions on assuming the government, the Queen complained that the northern part of her realm of Ireland had been long since out of good and quiet order by reason partly of the multiplication of the Scots; whilst the necessity for, and difficulty attending, their expulsion had engaged the attention of successive lieutenants, apparently without success. For, notwithstanding the frequent and severe defeats inflicted on them by Bingham and other commanders, whenever fighting was imminent, like vultures, the Scots were seen gathering to it.

Most of the chiefs and nobles had Scots mercenaries in pay and lent them to, or employed them against, one another or the English, impartially. For some time Shane O'Neill maintained a thousand of them. Their pay being in arrear they mutinied and, according to custom, proceeded to pillage the country they were called in to assist in defending. O'Neill eventually defeated and scattered them.

THE FITZGERALDS AND BUTLERS. — Though usually wanting the extenuating circumstances the chiefs were able to plead, the Norman-Irish nobles as disturbers of the peace had attracted attention long previous to the 16th century.

The Geraldines and Desmonds, as the midland and southern branches of the great Fitzgerald family were generally termed, were repeatedly, and rightly, held responsible for the unsettled state of the south country.

Writing to the Queen in the year 1567, Sir Henry Sidney gives a moving description of the desolation of the country between Youghal and Limerick in one direction, and Cork and Kinsale in another—burnt houses, ruined churches, nameless cruelties upon women, bones and skulls of those who died from violence, or succumbed to famine—all attributed to the Earl of Desmond, or his subordinates.

The feud between the Desmonds and the Butlers (the Ormond family) originating in their having supported opposite sides during the wars of the Roses, and perpetuated and intensified by the blood relationship of the Ormonds to Queen Elizabeth, caused their respective territories and the contiguous country to be plagued with a warfare compared with which the devastations committed by the chiefs appear insignificant. In the prosecution of this family dispute, the Geraldines did not scruple to imperil the English interest; the Earl of Kildare, when Lord Deputy, allying himself with two of the most inveterate enemies to English rule,

solely to obtain assistance against the Earl of Ossory (a Butler).⁴

During the latter half of the 16th century, nobles and chiefs were continually complaining of high-handed proceedings, and the assumption of superiority by the Desmonds. On one occasion, the Earls of Desmond and Clancare were about to decide by the arbitrament of battle whether certain lands were within the Palatinate of Kerry or not. Fortunately for their respective followers and the locality in dispute, the Lord President of Munster was in a position to interfere and pacify the disputants.

It was not only in their dealings with political and territorial rivals the Geraldines behaved dominantly. One Geraldine is credited with being the first to extensively employ the custom of coin and livery. Another, having obtained permission to levy that impost on the countries in his charge, by unwarranted exactions so harassed the Anglo-Irish residents as to compel them to vacate their holdings.

When, at last, the Desmonds broke into open-armed resistance to the Crown, they and their confederates acted on the principle that those not with them were against them. Neutrality they declared impossible. The only way to avoid harassing by both parties was to join one of them.

O'Neill assisted Desmond to raid Barry's country, in the province of Munster, and obtained therefrom the prodigious prey of four thousand kine and three

⁴ MacGeoghegan.

thousand horses. Lacy, an Anglo-Irish potentate, levelled his castles to the ground, lest they should fall into the hands of the Royalists, and took over a force of cavalry and infantry to the assistance of Desmond.

The rival house, the Butlers, were less turbulent, solely because the Fitzgeralds generally having ranged themselves on the Irish side restricted them to the other. When the Butlers did break away from their loyalist traditions, their proceedings were distinguished by a ruthless thoroughness in keeping with the methods of their rivals. A Butler, having spoiled Enniscorthy, traversed the borders of the Pale, and in sheer wantonness proceeded to burn the castles of those refusing to join him against the government.⁵ Clerical influence, working on the fear of danger to their mutual religion, temporarily reconciled some of the junior members of these families, for, on James Fitzmaurice taking up arms, he was joined by three brothers of the Earl of Ormond.⁶

Though at the time the most powerful of the Norman-Irish families, the Geraldines and Butlers were not singular in their turbulence. Other families of similar origin, but less importance, working on similar lines, fought against, or took sides with, their neighbours or the paramount power impartially, with equally disastrous results to the welfare of the country.

SEPT AND FAMILY DISPUTES.—Like the Desmonds, their kinsmen in the south, the O'Neills claimed to be over-lords in the northern districts, a claim Shane O'Neill at all times and seasons insisted upon. In a

⁵ Hatfield MSS.

⁶ O'Sullivan Beare.

reply to Sir Henry Sidney, concerning the death of his reputed half-brother and official rival, the Baron of Dungannon, O'Neill stated that he desired no superiority over the northern chiefs beyond what had been exercised by his ancestors. That this was not a wholly imaginary claim to precedence, in keeping with the character which earned for the claimant the nickname of "The Proud," is clear from one of the results of his historic visit to the Queen being his recognition as The O'Neill, and as having the like authority, jurisdiction, and pre-eminence of his ancestors.⁷

In appearance, confirmatory of Shane's ambitious claims, this explicit declaration, in the adroit hands of the English officials, served as an excuse for increased intrigues with the chiefs affected by its import.

O'Donnell and his wife received signal marks of royal favour, O'Reilly was created Earl of Breffny, and O'Dogherty, Maguire, and the lesser chiefs were promised assistance to repel the enforcement of claims sanctioned and confirmed by the royal authority. Needless to observe, years of warfare ensued, during which the O'Neills, amongst other barbarities, raided the peninsula of Inisowen and put all in it to the sword.⁸

The MacCarthys and the O'Briens in Munster, and the MacCoghlans and the O'Farrells, furnish other, but not the only, instances of long-continued and bloody family feuds.

The fact of a sept or family having confederated

⁷ Queen's Letter, 15.1.63.

⁸ MacGeoghegan.

with the English against other families would, with ordinary people having the slightest regard for consistency, have had the effect of restraining them from objecting to others acting similarly. But consistency was the one quality absent from every transaction of the period, as far as the natives were concerned.

Maguire and MacMahon took offence at O'Reilly's English sympathies, raided his country, and carried off everything they found. A similar reason prompted O'Rourke and Maguire to waste O'Ferrall's country in Meath,⁹ and O'Donnell, with some subordinate chiefs, to burn the countries of Clanricard and Galway; including the town of Athenry, at the time slowly recovering from its spoliation by the sons of the Earl of Clanricard in revenge for their father's imprisonment.

In the effort to discover motives for this inconsistency, we become aware of a curious feature in the politics of the period, viz., the frequent occasions on which chiefs or nobles devoted to the English interest were succeeded by others actively or covertly disloyal. Only exceptional circumstances or treatment would account for such an unusual sequence of events at one particular time.

In the incessant armed disputes with the Crown, relations were often found on opposing sides. As a rule this only embittered the struggle; the following is exceptional.

When Sir Conyers Clifford was defeated by O'Donnell and O'Rourke, he was assisted by the

⁹ O'Sullivan Beare.

latter's brother-in-law, the O'Connor Don. On the ground of this connexion O'Rourke declined to pursue the retreating Royalists, but O'Donnell, refusing to be bound by a tie which affected his ally only, followed and besieged O'Connor in Colooney Castle. This siege is noticeable for being one of the few instances where clansmen acted openly against their chief. O'Connor's men were so incensed at his taking part with the English that they assisted the besiegers.

Quarrels between members of the same family were, if possible, the most frequent of all.

The two branches of the O'Brien family, Thomond and Inchiquin, were constantly in arms against one another. During some hostilities between the Earl of Thomond and his uncle, the Earl obtained the assistance of English troops, an obligation amply repaid later, when Thomond earned the reputation of the most active and violent of all the Royalist partisans.¹⁰

The Earl of Tyrone endeavoured, in the usual manner, to suppress his relative of Clandeboy, and in the battle which ensued lost three hundred men. Another noble house, the O'Donnells, Princes of Tyrconnell, had continuous family disputes and also indulged in pitched battles. In one of these, between father and son, we have an instance of fighting from sheer liking for it only, several nobles with no interest in the quarrel having been killed on the young chief's side. In his turn, Hugh Roe O'Donnell, the confederate

¹⁰ *Life of Hugh Roe O'Donnell.*

leader, suffered from the pretensions of his cousin, Nial Garve. The latter's career may be quoted as typical of the period. Tempted by the prospect of obtaining the chieftaincy under official auspices, Nial Garve left the national party, and was for years a thorn in the side of the more able Hugh Roe. On the latter's death in Spain, where he had gone to acquaint Philip with the state of Irish affairs, Nial Garve dispensed with the usual formal submission to the English authorities, and was inaugurated as chief. The authorities, not approving of such independence, set up an official candidate and arrested Nial. On his escaping and taking up arms, a punitive force, accompanied by the official claimant, proceeded to "dissipate" his country and reduced his followers to a state of famine. Nial Garve fled into England, and eventually was offered the title of Baron and a grant of the possessions he had before quitting the national party. Execrating English ingratitude, and his own short-sightedness, he dropped from public notice.

In any enumeration of family quarrels, the Butlers, of course, figure. Thomas Butler's right to the succession was challenged by the natural son of a brother of the last Earl. The dispute was terminated only by the death of the challenger.

The worst instance of fratricidal warfare, instigated by official artifices and supported by Government arms, was that of the O'Carrolls. In their case, as in numerous other feuds, it is impossible to avoid the conclusion that as soon as any family or individual became powerful enough to constitute a danger to the

English, a coalition was formed against them, either from a feeling of self-preservation, objection to acknowledge any superior, least of all in their own ranks, or through the machinations of Government officials.

EFFECT OF LEGAL DISQUALIFICATIONS. — Undeniable as this tendency and the evil effects resulting from it most certainly were, proof is not wanting that many of the chiefs and nobles, who were blamed for converting the Island into a huge cockpit, had no other resource, except submission to injustice. To resort to arms against relatives, neighbours, or suzerain, was frequently the only means to assert a right or obtain redress for a wrong.

With the exception of five fully recognised families, and a few others partially admitted to an equality through having obtained letters of denization, the Irish, even though they had formally submitted, were unable to appeal to English law on equal terms with an official protégé or an English opponent. Consequently they had little confidence in it, and whenever possible, settled their disputes in the ancient manner. The Cavenaghs, who were not one of the five families, furnish an instance in point. Rather than refer a family dispute to the Lord Deputy they fought it out, and though two hundred men paid with their lives for the course taken, all concerned probably suffered less than if official interference had been solicited.

The O'Connors and the O'Morras, living in close proximity to the Pale, appear to have been continually in trouble. Until their country was annexed and

occupied they were harassed impartially by levies of Irish, a mixed force of both nationalities under the Earl of Ormond, and again by Irish under Sir C. Nugent.¹¹ Exasperated into resistance, they were beaten into submission, and their leaders advised to repair to England and lay their complaints before the throne. They did so, were refused a hearing, imprisoned for years, and their lands partitioned among the very officials on whose advice they had acted in submitting. The crimes of these septs lay in the position and quality of their lands. They were the Naboths of the period.¹²

An incident in the suppression of these O'Connors Faly, besides furnishing one of the last instances of ordeal by combat, illustrates the defenceless condition of the common people when the native system was decaying, and they were considered too contemptible for English law to be put in motion to protect them. Conor O'Connor accused a cousin, Teig, of killing some of his men while they were under protection. The killing was admitted, and justified on the ground that the men slain had consorted with another of the name, a rebel. Ordeal by combat was claimed, and with all due formalities took place before the English justices and officials. The accused was defeated and slain.

PERSONAL GRIEVANCES.—One of the most active and persistent of the rebel chiefs was Hugh Roe O'Donnell, Prince of Tyrconnell. Abducted when a youth at the instigation of Sir John Perrott, he was

¹¹ Hatfield MSS.

¹² O'Driscoll.

confined in Dublin Castle, from whence, at the cost of a permanently injured foot, he contrived to escape. From that day until his death in Spain from, as was alleged, poison administered by an agent of Carew, the maimed foot acted as a perpetual reminder of the sufferings and indignities he had been subjected to. Early in the war, when the Queen's Commissioners offered admittedly honourable terms of accommodation, all overtures were rejected at O'Donnell's request. His uncompromising hostility to the English Government eventually betrayed him into persuading the Confederates to attack the Royalist force at Kinsale; advice which ruined both himself and the cause he had so much at heart. For fourteen years the desire to avenge the execution of his father as a common malefactor at Tyburn was never absent from O'Rourke, Prince of Breffny. Not until he surveyed the shattered remnants of the Royalist force on the Curlew mountains was his desire gratified. Gratified, too, by granting the bodies of Clifford and Radcliffe, the English leaders, the honourable interment, the wounded vanity of their royal mistress had denied his dishonoured dead lying in foreign soil. Maguire, the gallant chief of Fermanagh, though he protested that his having joined O'Donnell was not from any conspiracy or malice towards the Queen's authority, but solely to obtain protection from the Binghamms who were ravaging his territory, was ordered by the Privy Council to be made an example of. The opportunity to do so never occurred, for, after inflicting several reverses on the Royalists, he met a soldier's death

outside the walls of Cork. The grievances of Gerald, Earl of Desmond, and James, the Sugaun Earl, were rightly attributed to the machinations of the English officials. The death of one and imprisonment of the other, though costing much treasure, many lives, and incalculable misery, placed immense estates at the disposal of the Crown.

In all these cases personal grievances were resented by undeniable acts of hostility. Not so the following. Florence MacCarthy More spent the greater part of a long life a prisoner in England, his only proved acts of disloyalty, marrying the heiress of Clancare without obtaining the royal permission, and resisting the slaughter of his people during an unprovoked raid by English officers. Considering that every form of injury and insult had been showered on MacCarthy, his endurance of, and acquiescence in, the tyrannical methods of administration which drove his compeers into rebellion presents one of the most curious problems of the time. In all probability, the superior knowledge and experience gained in a long residence in England had impressed his philosophical mind with the hopelessness, without foreign assistance, of resisting the English power. Unless MacCarthy's character has been misunderstood, it is possible that had he been permitted to throw the weight of his abilities into the scale against England, or suffered to remain at large when the Spaniards landed, the struggle would have proved a more arduous one to the victors than it did.

In the effort to keep afloat on the tumultuous sea of

troubles Elizabethan Ireland presented, one course was open to all: that of assisting the English. To youth this course presented many attractions, but with the truer insight of maturity the glamour disappeared. Many tried it, few consistently with real good will and to the end. To the majority of those who did venture on it, it was the one course holding out prospects of attaining objects, or gratifying feelings, their inferiority or weakness otherwise rendered impossible. Even that "primate of all traitors," the Earl of Tyrone, was wounded in the English service; and Florence MacCarthy never ceased to remind English officials of his youthful services against his countrymen. Some of the old Irish, as well as the Anglo-Irish, were always to be found in the Royalist ranks, and—as in the two battles marking the zenith and nadir of Irish military success, the Blackwater and Kinsale—Irish troops under their own chiefs, materially contributed to minimise the effects of many a defeat, or complete what otherwise would have been a bootless success.

With one exception, no possible means of swelling the volume of disorder and dissension was allowed to remain unemployed. Feminine influence, common enough in other countries at the period, was conspicuously absent from Irish affairs. Beyond the two cases mentioned, and the murder of the two Stacks (military commanders in English pay), at the instigation of the Lady of Lixnaw, women in Ireland do not appear to have taken the active part they are credited with in the internal disputes of other countries.

Another course particularly productive of unrest

was to permit or encourage an Anglo-Irish or English family, claiming to be the representative of one of the ten Normans to whom Henry II. granted the whole territory of Ireland, to revive this grant, or a modification of it, and thus attempt to wrest from the actual proprietors, lands and estates held uninterruptedly by their family or sept from time immemorial.¹³ A West of England family, the Carews, were particularly active in this direction.

UNFIT OFFICIALS.—Another method, responsible for much sanguinary warfare, was the employment of grossly unfit officials in positions which brought them in touch with the Irish.

Lord Power, a well-known and turbulent noble, was for some time employed reducing native malcontents to obedience. His method of procedure may be inferred from his employers being compelled to suppress him, "for according to the custom of mere Irishmen, burning and wasting towns which yet cleave fast to her Majesty." Another official, Willis, sent as sheriff to O'Donnell's country, was the cause of more disorder than all the traitors in Tyrconnell. Compelled at last to decamp, Willis, and the three hundred men and women forming his band, took refuge in a church, and owed their escape from death to Tyrone rescuing them before the irate Prince of Tyrconnell could starve them out. The misgovernment of part of Connaught by Fitton drove even "the Queen's" Earl of Thomond into rebellion, and led to a system of reprisals,

¹³ Taaffe.

terminated only by the final subjugation of that province. Cosby, the military commander of Leix and Offaly, was a monster of inhumanity. If one tithe of the indescribable cruelties popularly attributed to him be true, the Irish had good grounds for their belief that the deaths of himself, his son, and grandson, in conflict with the Irish was a direct manifestation of Divine disapproval.¹⁴ The ferocious administration of another military commander, Sir Peter Carew, was considered answerable for the revolt of Tirlogh Lenogh O'Neill, and the general revolt of 1569. Carew's attack upon the house of one of the Butlers at Kilkenny, when defended by eight men only, and the subsequent butchery of the garrison and every woman and child (including those at the breast) in it,¹⁵ branded him with the reproach of cruelty, even in that barbarous age.

CHARACTER OF NOBLES AND CHIEFS.—To follow further the endless dissensions and feuds of the chiefs and nobles would require a volume. To attempt to indicate individual motives and reasons would necessitate a library. Let it suffice that, instigated and supported by English policy and arms, noble fought against noble, chief opposed chief, Englishmen massacred Irish, and Irishmen murdered English. But above all the sickening details one fact stands out boldly. The policy of fomenting disorder, with its attendant internal feuds, unrest, and misery, would not have been succesful had not nobles and chiefs lent themselves to it.

¹⁴ O'Sullivan. ¹⁵ Ormond's Letter to Cecil, 24.7.69.

With a few honourable exceptions, both alike were without patriotism or political insight. They lived but in their present, and careless of consequences to their order, their people, and country, too readily resorted to the arbitrament of arms to further petty ends or resent imaginary injuries. Unwilling to surrender their ancient privileges, they converted them into oppressions in the effort to enforce them, and in so doing weakened the very class upon which they mainly relied.

Notwithstanding this inability to rise above their own immediate aims, to depict them as savage leaders of barbarian hordes is a perversion of historical accuracy. Equally great would be the error to claim all of them as champions of the Roman Catholic faith or Irish nationality.

Many of them were noblemen of education and parts. Oxford numbered some of them amongst her students. Others lived on terms of equality and friendship with Englishmen of rank. Some of them had in times of peace been the honoured guests of corporations, proud of their Englishry, and the exclusiveness of their banquets. Others, like Shane O'Neill, maintained a state and establishment of such costly magnificence as to astonish Englishmen, not unacquainted with the ostentatious luxury of the period. Last, but most important indication of their admitted status, all were received abroad by the proudest nobility in Europe as equals.

Other countries could point with pride to individual nobles equal to Tyrone or Florence MacCarthy, and

probably superior to Ormond, O'Donnell, Desmond, O'Rourke, and others. Yet when we consider the political and religious position and environment of the Irish leaders they compare favourably with English and Scotch nobles. As a class, their crimes and mistakes were common to their era and order ; many of their virtues peculiar to themselves. Scotch nobles, under pretence of loyalty, indulged private hates and feuds, and plunged their country into civil war. English nobles, influenced by doctrinal distinctions and foreign emissaries, were responsible for several insurrections, a deliberate attempt to ruin the national commerce, and unceasing attempts on the life of their sovereign. Both, without impugning their respective sovereign's rights, proffered their allegiance to foreign monarchs. The Irish chiefs could do no more.

Among the massacres characterising the period, that of the Irish women and children at Rathlin stands out pre-eminent for savagery and uselessness. The responsibility for its hideous conception rests partly upon the first Earl of Essex ; and Essex was described as one of the noblest of living Englishmen. Contrast Norfolk's treachery with the reply of Ormond, when Burleigh proposed to capture Desmond by treachery : " My Lord, I never will use treachery to any one." And again, when pressed to use his intimacy with Hugh O'Neill (Tyrone) to entrap him : " I have been employed by her Majesty in many services . . . all of which (I thank God) I have performed without any dishonest or filthy practices." And this is the nobleman called an " Irish braggart " because, forsooth,

he employed the graces of person and mind nature had endowed him with, to obtain favour in the estimation of his cousin, the Queen, for the purpose of forwarding schemes against a political rival. Language such as this may be soothing to the phrase-monger's feelings, but is certainly not fair criticism. Contrast further the pusillanimity of Northumberland with the manly spirit displayed by O'Rourke, when he refused to kneel before the Privy Council, and reproved the apostate priest attending him on the scaffold. It is more than doubtful if any of the ragged Irish chiefs, whose full dress an Englishman valued at less than a lawyer's fee, would have imitated the Scottish King and descended to the infamy of driving a bargain for acquiescing in the execution of his mother. The White Knight, Fitzgibbon, captured and surrendered the "Sugaun" Earl to Carew, under circumstances which ought rather to have excited his commiseration, but, though the previous relations between them may have justified the act, the universal abhorrence caused by receiving payment for it restricted to the individual its infamy. Though the Irish chiefs and nobles frequently broke solemn pledges, they were generally guiltless of obtaining a price for their want of rectitude. Nial Garve O'Donnell, Donal MacCarthy, and others, turned traitors, no doubt, but before falling victims to official artifices they were claimants to the lands and titles stipulated to be the reward of their perfidy.

EFFECT OF INTERNAL DISSENSIONS.—The degree to which the rivalries and jealousies of chiefs and nobles played into the hands of the English is fur-

nished by the failure to expel them from the Island in the last quarter of the 16th century. Under Tyrone's leadership, Ireland presented more the actuality of a nation than she had for centuries previously. Complete union had not been attained, but for the first time within four centuries the bulk of the national forces was arrayed on the national side. When the war was at its height, eighteen Irish and six Norman-Irish nobles only, supported the foreign domination. Opposed to it were fifty-three Irish and seventeen Norman-Irish of the same class.

The Irish Confederates had attained a position rendering their ultimate and complete success within the bounds of possibility. The English power cowered disheartened behind the bricked up gates of Dublin, the ramparts of Cork, and a few isolated strongholds. Then Tyrone temporised! The cause of this fatal hesitation did not proceed, as alleged, from a desire on his part to obtain possession of the Blackwater fort, the key to Ulster. It sprang from the incongruous elements of the confederacy itself; the unstable nature of the national character. Not even the certainty of the promised help from Spain could divert the national devotion from individual to national aims; could substitute patient and sustained effort for spasmodic heroism; could suppress feelings engendered by years of mutual distrust and antagonism. Time was lost in the Sisyphean task of fruitless negotiation. The delay permitted the English to discover new points of dissension, and intensify the old. The confederacy broke up. Tyrone's schemes were ruined.

ENGLISH POLITICAL ADMINISTRATION.

FOREIGN RELATIONS.—The general political upheaval on the Continent which followed the Reformation affected the connection between England and Ireland apart from the purely religious question.

Years before, when the exasperation with England was not so deep as it became later, the value of exploiting Irish disaffection as a menace to England had been thoroughly appreciated by the Continental nations. The French King, Francis I., despatched an envoy to O'Donnell and other chiefs to settle a treaty of alliance and declaration of war against England. His successor, Henry II., also opened negotiations with O'Neill and O'Donnell. In consequence, these chiefs on their own behalf, and for other lords of the country, placed their lives, properties, and forces under French protection.¹ The ties of a common ancestry, friendly feeling due to centuries of trading, and the intercourse resulting from Irish pilgrimages to the relics of St. James at Compostella, in conjunction with the geographical position of the two countries, contributed to a feeling amongst the disaffected Irish that the Spaniards were their natural allies against their powerful enemy. Charles V. sent Gonzaga Fernandez to Ireland to stir up rebellion against Henry VIII.; and later, maintained a correspondence with James, Earl of Desmond.²

Therefore, when England as the champion of

¹ MacGeoghegan.

² O'Sullivan.

Protestantism, deliberately entered upon a policy of intervention in the domestic affairs of France and Spain, it was but natural to expect a renewal of attempts to stimulate Irish ability to injure the common enemy. That, in the preliminary stages, such attempts did not attain the proportions expected was attributed mainly to the internal troubles of both Continental powers conceding Her Majesty a repose she otherwise would not have enjoyed,³ and indirectly to the unblushing mendacity and shameless intrigues which caused the French marriage negotiations to drag on for so long, and the fear of Philip of Spain that all hope of succeeding to the throne of England would be shattered by an avowed and complete rupture with that country.

The aggressive proceedings of the English, amounting to actual, if unofficial, warfare against the Spanish ships and colonies, at length humiliated the pride and exhausted the patience of a people not at that time credited with meekness or forbearance in their dealings with foreigners. Consequently, when the Irish represented their efforts to throw off the English yoke, as mainly directed to the maintenance of that form of religion Spanish bigotry alone tolerated, a certain and speedy prospect of intervention seemed assured. Spanish statesmen and officials required no incitements to this course of action; they had long known the depleting effect of the Irish ulcer. The persistent representations of the Irish prelates that a Spanish army in Ireland would compel the heretics to concen-

³ Walsingham, Ambassador to France.

trate their attentions upon that country, cease their attacks upon the Spanish coasts, and reduce their assistance to the rebels in Flanders; presented no new sphere of activity to them. O'Neill had been advised by the Spanish ambassador to revolt, direct encouragement to invade Ireland had been given to Stukeley, and the presence of Spanish soldiers at Kilmallock and Smerwick was neither questioned nor repudiated. Yet, withal, these were but feeble efforts, and had succeeded neither in embarrassing England nor materially assisting the Irish. The day dreams of Philip II., impossible of realisation though they were, had always influenced his actions, paralysing and rendering distasteful any attempt at striking England through Ireland. Philip was but mortal, and his probable successor was believed to entertain stronger and more acceptable views; a forecast justified by the third Philip's eager readiness to redeem the promise of assistance made to the Irish.

The significance of all this was not lost upon English statesmen or people. Lord Burleigh thought that if the contemplated invasion proved successful the loss of Ireland would prove in the end the loss of all else, for Spain would then acquire the command of the sea. Raleigh, as well, bluntly cautioned Sir Robert Cecil that the King of Spain sought not Ireland for Ireland's sake. One of the common sayings at the time crystallised the popular conviction in this view also—

He that England will win,⁴
Must with Ireland first begin.

⁴ Fuller's *Notable Sayings*.

Scottish ability to disturb the peace in Ireland was likewise well understood. The proximity of the two countries, and facility with which reinforcements for the attenuated followings of the Irish chiefs could be landed, constituted a standing danger—a danger attempted to be met by the usual futile proclamation against employing Scots troops without permission. Argyle, through his alliance with Shane O'Neill, was believed to exercise considerable influence in the north, and Scotch intrigues and negotiations with the northern Irish were known to be carried on. Later, when the English hold upon Ireland was at its feeblest, a circumstantial account was circulated that the King of Scots was in communication with, and supplying powder to, the Earl of Tyrone. A well-informed correspondent of Lord Burleigh warned him that if the English and Scotch should strive together, when the one had weakened the other, the wild Irish, like the put hawk, might drive out or carry away both.⁵ The warning thus quaintly conveyed was no alarmist's fancy. After events conclusively proved that so long as Scotland remained a separate, and frequently hostile, state, the subjugation of Ireland, or at least the northern portion of it, could not be permanently accomplished.

Torn by conflicting motives as the Popes were, their plans to prevent Ireland embracing heretical doctrines would be more pleasantly accomplished if in the execution of them the arch-enemy England was weakened. Constant correspondence was, therefore,

⁵ Sir T. Smith.

maintained with the disaffected Irish, and Papal agents innumerable flitted through the length and breadth of their country. Manœuvres well known to the Queen's ministers, and affording strong foundation for the belief that nearly if not all the insurrections they had to contend with were promoted or engineered by Rome. Writing from twenty-five years experience of Ireland, one informant of Cecil's considered the firebrands of all disaffection were the Papal emissaries: they in one day turning more of the Queen's subjects to rebellion than all the bishops, preachers, and army would win back in many years.⁶ To assist the mundane methods of their emissaries two of the Popes utilised the dread powers of the Church by issuing Bulls profuse with promises of indulgence to those aiding to expel the heretical English.⁷

The suitability of Ireland as a base from which to guide domestic strife had been early discovered by English malcontents—an appositeness not likely to decrease now the religious question bade fair to range the nations in hostile camps. The alleged plot by St. Leger for the destruction of the Queen and her ministers was said to have originated in Ireland.⁸ Whether true or not, those threatened knew that support would not be wanting to that or any other scheme having a similar object.

From this brief sketch of the foreign political outlook it is clear that in Elizabeth's reign Ireland

⁶ John Bird.

⁷ MacGeoghegan; Taaffe.

⁸ Earle to Burleigh, March, 1573.

was the disturbing and determining factor in the extraneous policy of England and her relations with foreign nations—a factor that became more necessary than ever to allay or remove when the political isolation of England, consequent upon the religious cleavage, showed signs of increasing. Whatever direction the effort to accomplish this might take must depend largely upon the position of the English Government in Ireland, the extent and degree of its hold upon the country, and the value of whatever resources it could command there.

ENGLISH AUTHORITY IN IRELAND.—In the early part of the 16th century five counties only (including Dublin) of the English Pale partially acknowledged the King's authority. Eight counties did not acknowledge him. From the document⁹ from which the authority for this statement is derived, it appears further, that in the limited area which then constituted the Pale, the sum of seven hundred and forty pounds was paid yearly as tribute to seven Irish chiefs. More than half a century later the payment of tribute was so customary that an express edict from the Lord Deputy was necessary to prevent the English garrison of Carrickfergus continuing to pay it; Carrickfergus, on Belfast Lough, being next to Dublin the greatest magazine and store in the kingdom.

About the time the Pale was paying tribute the Master of the Rolls was requested to advertise the King that his land of Ireland was so much decayed that his laws were not obeyed twenty miles in

⁹ *State Papers*, Henry VIII., Vol. II.

compass. Notwithstanding this explicit statement, of the English hold upon Ireland at this period, much capital has been made of an Irish Parliament, in 1541, conferring the crown and title of King of Ireland upon the English monarch. The importance of any Parliamentary ordinance depends upon the representative constitution of the body by which it was enacted. Six chiefs only sat in the Parliament of 1541. They were neither the most important nor representative, nor had they a mandate from any districts or communities to act as they did.

Previous to the Parliament of 1584 (5) in which fifty Irish chiefs — representatives of all the chief families — sat, the expression, "Irish Parliaments" must be taken to mean Parliaments of the Pale. And even in these, it was said, numbers of Englishmen sat as burgesses for towns of which, so far from being residents as the law directed, they were total strangers to, having neither seen nor known them previous to becoming their representatives. Actually, until the close of the reign of Henry VIII., none but those of English birth were eligible for the Irish Commons. The mere Irish were never admitted.¹⁰

In the year 1546, when the wise policy introduced by Henry VIII. was exercising its conciliatory effect, several earls and chiefs informed the King that the country was never more peaceful, nor in a better state of conformity; statements corroborated by the Irish Council, with the addition, that the Irish were more obedient than ever before known in their time, and

¹⁰ Sir J. Davies.

the significant reservation that, "as for the Irishry albeit your Majesty's laws be not current among them."¹¹ There can be but one construction placed on these sentences and the accompanying context, and that is, that the obedience of the Irishry to the King and his Deputy was of recent growth, and did not extend to his laws and customs.

After the death of Henry, the gradual contraction of the sphere of English influence, which had been in progress for nearly a century, was forcibly stopped, and replaced by a policy of expansion.

On Queen Mary's accession, the Chancellor Cusack reported to the effect that the whole country was in such good quiet that the judges held their assizes not only at Cork, Limerick, and Kerry, but in the most distant shires of the West; the most troublesome of the chiefs and nobles, as holders of the Queen's Commission, having compelled their countrymen to remain quiet. This very explicit statement has been the subject of constant misconstruction. If read correctly it amounts to no more than. That a numerously escorted Commission of Assize having held gaol deliveries in the cities of Cork and Limerick, both strongly held in the English interest by the townsmen and garrisons, had between these cities traversed a part of Kerry, the chief and only town in which it was probable or practicable assizes would be held, Tralee, being also held for the same interest. The Commission had then returned by the borders of Connaught, touching at Athlone, also strongly

¹¹ *State Papers*, Vol. III.

garrisoned, and the seat of a provincial governor. Further, that the nobles and chiefs said to have assisted the judges were those whose estates and territories were on or contiguous to the route indicated.

Putting aside the physical difficulties in the way of the Commission having taken any other route or visited other places than those mentioned, there are ample grounds for assuming that their journey was more in the nature of a military punitive expedition than the ordinary judicial circuit, from the circumstances, that more than twenty years afterwards Lord Deputy Sidney, accompanied by the usual display of force, made a progress through the same districts, and immediately afterwards the chiefs resumed the rule of their territories as if the English or their Queen had never existed.¹² The following year the Earl of Desmond—no mere Irish chief, but the head of the Norman-Irish Geraldines of the South—drew attention to the invasion of his privileges by the Queen's judges venturing to enter the Palatinate of Kerry. A generation later again, Lord Deputy Fitzwilliam, wishing to hold sessions and assizes in Connaught, was compelled to take for escort all the garrisons and part of the general muster of the Pale territory.

In reality, except for a small circle round Dublin, comprising half of each of the five home counties, English rule had practically ceased, or, as in the case of the north, had never been enforced beyond a limited degree only. The remainder of the Island, cities and

¹² *Life of Florence MacCarthy More.*

garrison-towns excepted, was held and governed by sixty Irish chiefs and thirty Norman-Irish nobles.¹³ Each supreme in his own region, as it was termed.

Regardless of the actual facts, or as a consequence of them, the royal claim by right of conquest was never more strictly insisted on. Whether able to maintain this claim or not, it was too convenient and far-reaching a weapon to be lightly discarded. No right could be acquired not founded on it; and no length of possession set up against its unanswerable force of argument. Later, when the tide had somewhat turned, documentary submissions by penitent chiefs were usually made to contain confessions of usurpation, and renunciations of all claims to territorial rights and properties. While claims, similar to those of the Carews, involving large areas in native possession, were sympathetically received and energetically supported.

In addition to the claim by right of conquest, a still more extraordinary one was disclosed in the Act of Attainder of Shane O'Neill. In this the whole territory of Ireland was said to have been vested in the English King, Henry II., in right of his succession from King Gurmond, son of Belin, King of Great Britain: "afore the coming of Irishmen into Ireland from Spain."

DOMESTIC ADMINISTRATION.—The first symptom of any coherent or continuous policy by the English governors, beyond the determination to acquire all they could and retain it if possible, resulted from a

¹³ 2nd vol. *State Papers*, Henry VIII., O'Connell.

recognition of the impossibility of maintaining their position were the Irish to unite in opposition to them. "Divide to govern" became the password, and the promotion of particular dissensions to ensure general weakness the keynote of their policy.

Though the successful prosecution of this policy had succeeded in reducing the danger to English domination, it had not rendered the Island less difficult to govern. That, the royal ministers professed to consider, would only be attained when the native system had been entirely replaced by English methods; when the ability of the nobility and chiefs to identify their followers with their public and private differences had disappeared; and the power to muster mercenary troops had vanished with the native customs for maintaining them. They considered, further, that subordinate chiefs and clansmen would no longer range themselves under the banners of the bearers of tribal patronymics, once they had exchanged them for others, signifying adhesion to the new order.

Accordingly, several of the native leaders were persuaded to surrender their estates to the Crown. When receiving them back on the English system of tenure, titles of honour were conferred on those willing to accept them in place of the distinctive "The," and to those whose religious scruples permitted the acceptance, Church lands and the patronage of livings were given.¹⁴ The first results of this new departure did not promise well for its continuance. Of the six chiefs who accepted the new titles, O'Donnell found his son

¹⁴ MacGeoghegan.

with most of his clan in arms against him, the Earl of Thomond met with similar disapprobation, the Earl of Clanricard was replaced by an Irish MacWilliam, and The O'Neill was deposed. The surprise and disgust caused by this renunciation of native titles was particularly marked when an O'Brien exchanged the dignity of "Dalcais" for the Earldom of Thomond.¹⁵ While the repudiation of any equality or superiority arising from the foreign titles was coarsely expressed by Shane O'Neill when informed a MacCarthy had become Earl of Clancarty: "I keep a lacquey as noble as he."

Other chiefs, in order to obtain an exclusive title to the properties they held, also formally surrendered them to the Crown, and received grants by patent in return. In some instances this proceeding was repudiated by the Irish heir, and led to many years of family feuds and litigation. Another variation of the same principle occurred when Lord Deputy Sidney persuaded others to surrender their estates in return for annuities. As the next future recipient of the annuity was a matter of dispute, this scheme likewise failed to give satisfaction. In several cases cessions of estates and acceptances of hereditary titles that had passed unchallenged in the lifetime of the first holders were, on their deaths, immediately disputed, the heirs, according to Irish custom, assuming possession and discarding or repudiating the titles. In other cases, where the official nominee became the

¹⁵ Taaffe.

chief, and the government indemnified the native claimant, the arrangement, though it prevented the usual disputes, did not reconcile public opinion to the innovation.

Still another plan was to so educate and train junior members of chief families, entrusted to English custody, that, relying upon the new ideas and sympathies thus fostered, they could be safely substituted for any disaffected chief of the family. Frequently tried and seldom successful—the worst instance of failure being the Earl of Tyrone, the Confederate leader—this artifice possessed a compensatory advantage in causing divisions and disturbances, thereby affording a pretext for modifying the ownership of, or annexing, the properties involved.

These new style proprietors: Earls, annuitants, or suppositious chiefs, were considered renegades by the old Irish Party, and with others who embraced the royal cause may be identified in contemporary native narratives by the prefix “the Queen’s.”

After the accession of Elizabeth the determination to minimise, if not remove, the foreign and domestic dangers by converting the shadowy claims of a mythical sovereignty into the stern reality demanded by the situation grew rapidly. Whenever possible, regardless of acknowledged right or moral obligation, the boundaries of the Pale were extended. Disputed districts were taken possession of by Royalist troops, opened up by the construction of communications, and held by the erection of forts. On the southern borders of the Pale the territories of three septs had

been summarily confiscated and annexed. A parliamentary statute authorised the Lord Deputy to divide the extensive districts thus acquired into fiefs, and make prudent grants of them to any English subject whom he might deem likely to advance the English interest. This arbitrary proceeding begot its own punishment, for between the violent opposition of the dispossessed proprietors, and the dissatisfaction at the partial manner in which the grants were made, the annexed country was for many years the most disturbed and troublesome of any.

FINANCIAL.—Amidst the alarm and disquietude of the Irish caused by these proceedings, complaints that the government of Ireland was a drain upon English resources began to be heard. Many of the towns in England objected to the burden of furnishing men for the interminable Irish wars, while on all sides the Irish business was described as a malady and consumption of the times.

All through the correspondence between the Queen and her Ministers these complaints continually appear in some form or another, and were unquestionably used to influence the adoption of measures unfavourable to the Irish. Her Majesty was reminded that a million had been spent in the country but a short time before, and a better kingdom might have been purchased at less expense.¹⁶ Successive Lord Deputies were therefore instructed, that the Queen found Ireland a great charge to her and burdensome to her

¹⁶ Sir W. Raleigh.

subjects, and required to decrease the charges and increase the revenue.

In deference to these instructions, an effort to make the administration self-supporting was attempted: the principle and mode of application indicating the area and extent of control exercised by the Royal Ministers. For the maintenance of the royal garrisons and government, certain assessments had been hitherto levied, with the consent of the principal residents, on the English districts. Lord Deputy Sidney changed this into a permanent revenue by substituting a composition for the assessment. At the same time, to increase the charges and make them more equitable, he disallowed all exemptions, and by Orders in Council made a general imposition on all the subjects.

This proceeding excited great discontent, and the new Irish of the Pale, headed by Lords Baltinglass, Trimbleston, and others, despatched agents to London to complain of it. The agents were committed to prison, and the imposition approved by the Queen. Such a storm of resentment and opposition resulted that even the Queen was appalled. The agents were released, and the Lord Deputy ordered to bring the matter in dispute to some speedy accommodation.

MUTUAL RELATIONS.—While it is clear from the readiness to compromise this dispute, there existed a disinclination to force the Irish to extremities, it is equally evident the Queen's Ministers in England were in ignorance of the actual condition of affairs in Ireland, otherwise the futility of attempting to reduce expenditure when the irresistible logic of events was

daily demonstrating its impossibility must have presented itself to them. At the time the relations between governors and governed were entering on a new phase. The disaffected were growing stronger and more united than at any previous period. The offensive operations of the O'Neills in the north, the Baltinglass confederates in the midlands, the Burkes in the west, and Desmonds in the south—all of them undertaken with an object, not the aimless kicking against the pricks characterising former revolts—were but several indications of their growing power. The Irish officials were confronted with the seriously considered possibility of the governed throwing themselves into the arms of a hostile power or making themselves independent. They had begun to realise that former administrative methods no longer sufficed to remove the difficulties they had to contend with, and they were only too well aware that to permit a continuance of the prevailing hostile spirit would be to encourage it. To attempt, by conciliation, to lessen the number and importance of the disaffected was declared impossible by the best informed, while to use repressive measures would require the employment of a large force, cost immense sums, and occupy considerable time. Moreover, were it possible to remove the Queen's parsimonious objections, the foreign outlook precluded embarkation on a course of force until all others had been tried.

That before matters had reached this stage her Majesty's Ministers saw nothing inconsistent with her claims or derogatory to her dignity in the

demands of the Irish may be presumed from the chief Minister, Lord Burleigh, contemplating the grant of self-government to them, and preferring the retention of the native proprietors to forming settlements and colonies.¹⁷ The same Minister's advice, when the Alençon marriage project (one of the inducements to which was that Ireland would no longer be in daily peril of revolt) finally fell through, leaves no doubt as to his sentiments: "You must conciliate Ireland, allow the chiefs to continue their ancient greatness, take away the fear of conquest lately grafted on the wild Irish, and wink at disorders which do not affect the crown." Statesman-like advice, unfortunately not acted on.

Among the dissentient nobles there was no question of severing the English connection till, through the adroit management of the religious question, there appeared no other exit from an otherwise impossible position. Their demands originally amounted to no more than a larger and more continuous share in the government of the whole country—a return, in fact, to the system which, until recently, had been in operation almost since the invasion; under which the business of local government had been carried on by them without interference from the authorities in Dublin. Then with regard to the chiefs. Though the majority were also originally willing to admit the claims of the English crown, there can be no question that, provided they were permitted to rule after their own fashion in

¹⁷ *Raleigh in Ireland.*

their own territories, the power to which the sovereignty pertained had become a matter of indifference. Later through the same clerical contrivances by which the nobles had been moved, a desire to exclude England altogether was manifested.

Judging from their correspondence and plans the Irish leaders were thoroughly conversant with the foreign and domestic questions of the day, as well as the projects and intentions of their English rulers. They were known to be in communication with foreign powers and the Papacy, and to look to Spain as the power through whose assistance they hoped to attain their ends. What those ends were is difficult to define. The only pronouncement which would enable them to be authoritatively defined are the demands of the Baltinglass confederates and the terms of peace formulated by the Earl of Tyrone—both practically amounting to possession of the country and government, and retention of the Catholic form of worship, under the sovereignty of England. But the Irish leaders were not devoid of intelligence. They did not anticipate, if Spain assisted them to throw off the English yoke, no return would be expected. There was no native dynasty to restore to the throne; no universally accepted candidate among the chiefs to place upon it. The only practicable alternative was some form of national government under the suzerainty of Spain.

OFFICIAL MACHINERY.—At this juncture the administrative machinery consisted of a Lord Deputy, or Lord Lieutenant, sent from England as the Queen's

representative, and a Council of State, comprising official members and administrative officers. Local administration was in the hands of Governors of Provinces, or Lord Presidents, and a Council formed from the local nobles and prelates, assisted by minor officials. Merely nominal as these administrations were in the southern and western provinces, in the north they were replaced by purely military control. Though occasionally a Parliament was summoned, all Governmental measures were transacted by the Council, the administrative orders being promulgated in the form of Orders in Council. These orders were supposed to reflect instructions received from London, as well as the views of the Lord Deputy and his advisers. Owing to the distance and slowness of communications, the liability of affairs to enter on a new phase before directions concerning them could reach the Irish executive occasionally led to a conflict of action, but, as a rule, the Queen's Ministers were guided and advised by the officials in Ireland.

OFFICIALS.—As the success or failure of any undertaking must depend largely upon the instruments entrusted with its execution, it will not be out of place to glance at the characteristics of the Elizabethan officials.

With few exceptions, English and Anglo-Irish officials generally contemplated the affairs of the country they were deputed to rule from a purely English point of view. In their communications with the Home Government, and official pronouncements, they rang the changes upon the foreign danger,

domestic difficulties, and expense of Government, at the same time exaggerating into armed revolt every petty disturbance or escape from deliberately-planned massacre. To them the Irish owed the designation of "rebels;" the former official description of "enemies" not being sufficiently comprehensive of penal liabilities.

Official positions in Ireland had arrived at the stage of being considered hereditary or confined to families. Some of the officials and families had claims upon Irish properties, others had lost relatives in the constant wars, others again based claims for consideration upon services rendered. Though their claims were diverse, the claimants were unanimous in considering the bestowal of estates the only satisfactory settlement of them; and official position provided both opportunity and means for profiting by any settlement. That Governmental measures could be prosecuted, and national esteem preserved from the ignominy of defeat at the hands of a despised enemy, by means tending to the attainment of personal ends, was a fortuitous circumstance, confirming, in the opinion of those entrusted with their execution, the justice and expediency of such measures.

In abilities and methods Sir Walter Raleigh and Sir George Carew, though differing essentially in many qualities, may be quoted as types of the soldier-administrators, many of these officials were compelled by the nature of their employment to become.

RALEIGH.—From the day at Smerwick, when, as a young captain, he took a prominent part in the

execution of six hundred foreigners and Irish (including pregnant women) until the Queen's death, Raleigh, either in person or through having the Queen's ear, pervaded Irish affairs. To Raleigh was due much of the unreasonable parsimony that, acceptable though it was to his royal mistress, fettered to the extent of paralyzing the Irish administration. As was also due the sinister advice not to shew mercy to a defeated chief because the offender's country was worth the royal keeping. His great talents were devoted to intrigues and efforts to thwart the purposes of those inclined to deal justly with the natives. He threw aside the claims of personal friendship rather than agree to measures calculated to have gone far towards removing the Irish difficulty, and was responsible for countenancing assassination when other means failed to remove opponents. Despite this reputation, and the fact that he was both a land grabber and monopolist, the charm of person and manner which fascinated his susceptible royal mistress and her maids of honour, had its influence on a people always sensitive to personal attractions enabling Raleigh to gain the confidence of the Southern Irish to a greater degree than the generality of his countrymen, and to live unmolested amongst them at a period when race antagonism ran high. In one particular only did Raleigh differ for the better from other officials and captains—he was not surrounded by a swarm of relations.

CAREW.—George Carew—successively Sir George, Baron Carew, and Earl of Totnes—first appears in

Irish annals in connection with a raid upon the Knight of Glinn's territory. Later, we read that through the unintended good offices of his Uncle Wingfield, Master of the Ordnance, he escaped the fate of his brother, killed in the rout at Glenmalure. Next, that an English jury in Dublin had returned a verdict of wilful murder against him for slaying, in broad daylight, an unsuspecting Irishman, believed to have been present at Glenmalure. An exploit which drew from Secretary Walsingham the remark, that George Carew had committed a very foul act.

Judging from official records, Carew was harsh, cruel, and bloodthirsty, hesitating at nothing to effect his purpose. Despite these blemishes and his addiction to the tortuous methods of the period, he was accounted an open and courageous foe. As a military commander, cautious and capable, and as an administrator, unsurpassed. Carew originated the practise of making the submission of one rebel conditional upon his assassinating some rebel friend or kinsman, and the plan of bestowing rewards and maintenance upon those Irish who did service upon their countrymen. The most discreditable affairs attributed to him were the intrigues to entrap the "Sugaun," Earl of Desmond, Nugent's plot to assassinate that noble's brother, the robbery of the Spanish commander's dispatches after his surrender,¹⁸ the plots to poison the Earl of Tyrone,¹⁹ and Florence MacCarthy,¹⁹ and complicity in the alleged poisoning

¹⁸ *Pacata Hibernia.*

¹⁹ *Life of Florence MacCarthy More.*

of Hugh Roe O'Donnell.²⁰ All strongly suggestive of the methods of the period, and explaining the mingled hatred and dread Carew inspired in the Irish. Carew's exceptionally rapid rise ; he having held in succession almost every position of responsibility in Ireland ; owed something to family influence, and the exertions of his wife, no doubt. Yet, if success be the one test of merit, he thoroughly deserved all his honours, and the trust and confidence his royal mistress reposed in her " dear George."

In contrast to the rewards showered upon Carew and officials of his class are the final scenes marking the close of the official careers of other workers in the Irish " prosecution," as it was termed. One, symbolic of the esteem always conceded to success achieved by means agreeable to the public conscience. The other, the danger of employing methods not generally approved of.

SIDNEY.—Sir Henry Sidney (Big Henry of the Beer), after long and varied services in Ireland ; during which, by calling into existence a system of provincial administration he brought about the first actual establishment of English rule beyond the Pale, and by abolishing several burdensome exactions took from the native and semi-native territorial magnates some measure of their ability to oppress the lower orders of the community ; returned to his native country poorer in everything but reputation. The courage and honesty of word and deed which distinguished his administration, and made him

²⁰ Carew's letter to Mountjoy, 1602.

acceptable to all ranks of the Irish, failed to silence the voice of detraction. His last years were embittered by the Queen's scornful neglect of his Irish services.

ESSEX.—Animated by the generous instincts of a great noble, and the knowledge derived from his favourite political study—Irish affairs—the Earl of Essex began his administration in Dublin by holding out promises of restitution to the plundered natives. After a short and disastrous career; a victim to the palace intrigues he had not scrupled to employ against others; Essex deserted his office, returned to England, engaged in treasonable practices, and perished on the scaffold.

PERROTT.—Sir John Perrott, the least known Lord Deputy of the three, was said to be a natural son of Henry VIII. Promoted from the Government of Munster to the position of Lord Deputy in the expectation that his haughty and quarrelsome disposition would be suitably employed bridling the insolency of the Irish, he held the reins of power for three years only, and was then recalled to England. Shortly afterwards, on accusations from Dublin, he was arrested, tried, and condemned to death. Relegated to the Tower, he there, under the shadow of the axe, lingered for some time, and died a State prisoner. From the Irish point of view, Perrott's term of office was blemished by the abduction of the young O'Donnell and his companions. The tears and lamentations accompanying his departure from Dublin testify to the appreciation of his rule by the non-official and lower classes of the capital.

Notwithstanding they were, in one case, the object of fond recollections, in another of cousinly partiality, to the Sovereign herself, and had the support of influential friends and relatives, these Englishmen were treated with contempt and contumely. They had been accused of the crime of seeking some rational basis upon which to amicably settle the interests of the two nationalities. The alternative and generally accepted policy they were expected to conform to, with its independence of control and crafty methods, is writ large in official transactions with the great landed proprietors.

TREATMENT OF TERRITORIAL MAGNATES.—The Earl of Desmond having been confined for some time in the Tower, was permitted to escape from London, on conditions framed by the Queen's Privy Council. He at once proceeded to Ireland, and on landing in Dublin was re-arrested by the Irish authorities, and confronted with other and more onerous conditions. To these he refused to agree. The details of the second arrest, and the conditions sought to be imposed, give the impression of an attempt to drive the Earl into rebellion. That was the result. That it was likewise the light in which many of Desmond's contemporaries viewed it is evident from a numerously-signed paper advising the Earl not to agree to fresh conditions, and pledging the signatories' lives and goods to defend him against the Lord Deputy, or any other person, coveting the Desmond inheritance.²¹ Pledges

²¹ *State Papers, 1574.*

that proved ineffectual to save Desmond's life or lands.

In a similar manner official machinations drove that astute politician, Florence MacCarthy, into committing the only overt act of rebellion his numerous and indefatigable enemies could produce in evidence against him. Fortunately for MacCarthy, this outbreak occurred when he was too high in favour and reputation at the English Court to be dealt with summarily by the Irish authorities.

After the capture of the "Sugaun," Earl of Desmond, the Irish Council, though directed to send him to England for disposal, tried and condemned him in Ireland, so that if, as was feared, he should die in the meantime the Crown would have his lands. Another Desmond pithily expressed the Irish grievances to the Earl of Ormond in the complaint that Englishmen were not content to have the lands and liberty of the Irish, but, under cover of law, by false and sinister motives, unmercifully sought their lives.

From the accession of Elizabeth until the end of the century, three Parliaments only were summoned. One, for the raising of revenue; two, for the attainder of Shane O'Neill and the Earl of Desmond, followed in due course by the partition of their large estates.

Were other proofs required that the fears of the Irish were not groundless, they will be found in the writings of Captain Thomas Lee, and the proclamation, before referred to, of the Earl of Essex. In this it was said, any of the men of Ireland whose estates

had been taken through oppression, or by any form of violence or illegality, would have them restored.²² There could be no restitution without purloining ; nor would an explicit promise of that nature be made without ample grounds. Turning to Captain Lee, this accredited English agent — writing from an experience acquired by long residence in Ireland — advised the restoration (subject only to certain charges for supporting garrisons) of their countries to the chiefs, and to make the governors and sheriffs more acceptable to the Irish. To support the probability of these recommendations pacifying the Island, he gave the names of six principal chiefs willing to receive the Queen's forces and let her laws pass current.

SETTLEMENTS.—The attainder of the Earl of Desmond placed immense estates at the disposal of the Crown. The original occupiers had been reduced to insignificant numbers. Those remaining were to be transported to the woods and mountains of Kerry. Thus providing space for English colonies, to become in time, it was confidently predicted, the salvation of Ireland and a bulwark to England. Elaborate schemes were duly formulated. Undertakers, as these prospective proprietors were termed, were to be given estates of from four to twelve thousand acres, at a low rent for the first three years, free from taxes, and liable only to subsidies levied by Parliament, Free trade with England was guaranteed, and the Crown engaged to protect the infant settle-

²² *The Four Masters.*

ments for three years. The undertakers on their part were required to import English families to cultivate the soil, to erect all that was necessary in the way of buildings, to maintain a proportion of soldiers, and to promote the breeding of horses. Not a word about the natives ! They figure among the prohibitions. The undertakers were prohibited from conveying any part of their grants to the mere Irish, maintaining any of them on the estates, or allowing their female heirs to marry any man unless of English birth.

This, though the largest in magnitude of area involved, was not the only attempt at giving effect to the dictum to root out the natives, confiscate their property, and people the country with English.

Immediately the sword of a Scot had removed, in the person of Shane O'Neill, the most powerful of the Northern chiefs, the authorities in Dublin began to entertain a project of peopling Ulster with English residents and Flemish Protestant refugees. This project, the first of the attempted plantations in the Northern province, was to have included parts of the territories of the O'Hanlons and their sub-chiefs. The grants were on somewhat similar lines to those made previously on the southern borders of the Pale, and the grantees likewise were termed undertakers. Except to intensify the local chaos, and ruin some of the undertakers, no permanent result was effected. A failure which might have been foreseen, the country being left "waste altogether, without a house, peel, or castle left standing in it, but a sorry little fort, pitched of sods and turfs."

Loss of property and prospects were not the worst mischances which befell some intending settlers. Sir T. Smith, having obtained a grant of an estate near Ardes, sent his natural son to take possession. The rightful owner slew the son as an intruder, routed his followers, and continued in undisturbed possession.

About three years afterwards, the Earl of Essex endeavoured, "at his own charges," to conquer the Barony of Clandeboye. At his own charges was merely the euphemism for at the cost of the native proprietors they were to dispossess, for Essex's soldiers were to receive no pay, but after two years' service, four or two hundred acres of land each, according to the arm, mounted or foot, they belonged to. Official and personal jealousies, combined with the usual Irish objections, wrecked this attempt also. Commenting upon it, Sir T. Welsford wrote to Lord Burleigh that he found the Irish labouring under the suspicion that the war had been undertaken as a private enterprise and not by the Queen's directions. They were, therefore, more enraged with the fury of desperation than he had ever before noticed, and affirmed they were not rebels, only engaged defending their own lands and goods.

Contemporaneously with these ineffectual efforts to found settlements, an attempt was made, without unduly disturbing vested interests or native susceptibilities, to pacify the country west of the Shannon.

COMPOSITION OF CONNAUGHT. — By judicious management, Sir Nicholas Malby had persuaded the lords of Connaught and the O'Rourke to consent to a

scheme that, while avoiding the most derogatory features of former submissions and agreements, peaceably brought about a similar condition of affairs, social and political, to that existing in the English districts ; and, without loss of dignity or property by those concerned, substituted for the irregular control of individuals no longer tramelled by public opinion or ancient laws and customs, a system of public and private obligations recognised by the only power in the land sufficiently interested and strong enough to enforce it. Unfortunately for the success of this experiment, the cruel and tyrannous government of Sir Richard Bingham caused many of the chiefs to revert to their former unsatisfactory relations and armed resistance.

BINGHAM. — This Richard Bingham, the most notorious member of a very prominent family in Elizabethan times, claimed a considerable share of public attention, his character, as depicted by contemporaries, displaying a curious medley of the good and bad qualities of both nationalities. Bingham's early administration in Connaught was principally noticeable for his disarming an English reinforcement to bestow their arms upon some Irish levies and for the mildness of his rule, offering, as it did, such a contrast to the fierce and imperious disposition he afterwards displayed. Whether this change was the result of long residence in the wilds of the West among a population whose natural ferocity had never been tamed, or was, as the chiefs asserted, his true character, there is not sufficient material to decide. Irish writers describe Bingham's

career as one long nightmare of cruelty, beginning with the massacre at Smerwick and ending only when, discredited and disowned, he was relieved of the provincial governorship.

That this harsh estimate was not without reason, the savage ferocity of his orders during the Armada executions bears witness. Bingham proved himself a skilful commander, self-reliant and fertile in resource, achieving several successes, principally against the Scots. His barbarity in obtaining possession of the fort at Enniskillen by treachery and putting the garrison and their families to the sword brought him into deserved discredit, while the rebellion in Connaught was attributed to the personal dislike the chiefs had conceived for him. In retaliation for the cruelties Bingham had perpetrated in that province Tyrconnel marched into it and slew every English Protestant between the ages of fifteen and sixty, and unable to speak Irish, that fell into his hands. After the disaster at the Blackwater, the Privy Council sent Bingham back to Ireland to command the military operations. His death, immediately after landing, closed a career, unique even in that day, and certainly deprived Irish history of a most stirring chapter.

ENGLISH ACTIVITY.—Not the least of the phenomenal movements of the Elizabethan period was the assiduity of the English in the pursuit of any enterprise promising gain or advantage. Visions of El Dorados were common to all ranks. Land hunger, a disease till then little known, appeared to have taken possession of all classes, and with these visions and

cravings a reckless determination to let nothing stand in the way of their realisation was fast becoming a national characteristic.

This spirit of acquisition had been directed to Ireland, where it was commonly believed estates were to be had for the mere trouble of killing a few natives—aliens in language, manners, and customs. Noblemen and gentlemen having needy relatives and dependants (and their number was legion) turned to Ireland and its English governors as to a naturally provided relief from their perplexities. To provide for a moiety of the applicants was impossible; to refuse them would have been impolitic. Actuated by these desires and beliefs, and countenanced by persons in authority acquainted with the country, several English adventurers solicited permission to raise troops, and by a process of spoliation and rapine, without parallel even in Ireland, carve out estates for themselves.

In the meantime the Irish officials were not idle. Always before them was the desire of the Queen that the province of Munster might be re-peopled and inhabited with civil, loyal, and dutiful subjects. This had been partly accomplished at the Desmonds' expense. For the remainder they had conceived various devices calculated to give effect to the royal views. Circulars were scattered broadcast throughout England inviting younger sons of families to repair to Ireland and take up grants of land on somewhat similar terms to the undertakers, stress being laid on the prohibitions.

One proposition, credited to Spenser, included the

wholesale deportation of the natives of some of the best and most fertile districts to others rendered desolate by disorders and punitive expeditions, their places to be filled by Protestant immigrants. Beyond the unity of the family, this proposition recognised no more right or sentiment in the scheme of expatriation than is considered in the re-stocking of a grouse moor.

For manifest reasons, neither the proposed settlement by force of arms, had such been possible, nor the official projects, were received with favour by the non-official section of the Anglo-Irish community, some of them doubting if the island would be tranquillised by the extermination of the aborigines, because the English who would replace them were men, for the most part, doing no good at home and likely to do worse in Ireland.²³ Later, after a deportation system had been partially carried out, its wisdom was doubted by capable judges. Their experience of the English—who had not, so far, settled well any part of the country lately acquired—²⁴ inclining them to question whether new districts would be well settled.

Before any of these schemes had got into working order, the Irish, exasperated beyond control and emboldened by the foreign difficulties of their enemies, had, in many cases, taken up arms. The same year that witnessed the defeat of the Spanish Armada saw the beginning of hostilities that, sporadic at first,

²³ Tremayne's Letter.

²⁴ *Pacata Hibernia*.

gradually involved the whole country, led to an appalling waste of life and treasure, and lasted, with slight intermissions, well into the following century.

The first to be affected by the hostilities—known to native writers as the fifteen years' war—were the undertakers. Forsaking their recently acquired estates and newly-built residences, many of them fled to England. However, they were not the greatest sufferers. They, in general, had lost that which, in justice, was never theirs and had cost but little to acquire. The worst sufferers were those settlers and workers, who, attracted by grants of land at merely nominal rents, had invested their all in stock and materials for agriculture and husbandry. So great were the losses of many of these unfortunates that from one port alone—Waterford—eighteen hundred of them returned to their original homes²⁵ to spread, no doubt, hatred and animosity against their late country and its native inhabitants.

DECLINE OF ENGLISH POWER.—As time progressed, matters grew from bad to worse with the English. So far from rooting out the natives there seemed every probability they themselves would be expelled from the island. Dark, indeed, must the prospect have been when, at a conference held at Faughart in 1596, the Queen's Government seriously proposed to make Dundalk—less than threescore miles from Dublin—the northern frontier of her dominions. Unfortunately, all overtures for a pacification were rejected

²⁵ *Life of F. MacCarthy More.*

by the Irish ; and the opportunity of ages was lost for ever. The foreign outlook was not much more promising to the English either. Though weakened by the loss of the Armada, Spain had not relinquished the intention to humble her enemy. Another attempt to invade England was reported to be on foot, and, years before expectations were realised, rumours of an invasion of Ireland were in the air.

A strenuous effort to end the Irish business was consequently made, and the great expedition of the Earl of Essex determined on. Within eight months Essex was a prisoner in England, and the Irish leader was dictating terms to the Royal Commissioners ! A still greater effort was seen to be necessary. With the advent of Lord Mountjoy, military operations and negotiations were set on foot. Under cover of the latter the dropped threads of many an intrigue and feud were resumed. The most prominent opponents of the Crown eat and drank at the risk of sudden death. Forgery became one of the fine arts, seduction was elevated into a virtue,²⁶ and every artifice which wealth could further, or the diabolical cunning of Carew invent, was employed to remove or detach the Irish leaders, and sow dissension amongst their followers. Despite the profligacy of the means employed the desired end was attained. All organised resistance collapsed, and the foreign danger was dispelled or postponed by the capture of the Spanish force at Kinsale.

²⁶ O'Sullivan.

English officials, again in a position to enforce the traditional policy, manifested by their actions that half-measures would no longer be tolerated.

EXTERMINATION.—The Irish were accustomed to spoil and wanton destruction; they were now to experience its indiscriminate application. Lord Grey, when Deputy, had so devastated the vicinity of Armagh that the Queen was informed but little more was left for her to reign over than ashes and carcasses.²⁷ The Earl of Ormond in his expedition to the south had also wasted the land, until whole districts having to choose between starvation and the national cause, abandoned the latter. Tyrone, Desmond, and others, had likewise ravaged the lands of declared foes and doubtful friends alike; the two former in one expedition alone pillaging and destroying one hundred and eighty-five collections of farms and houses (termed towns) in the Barrymore country. Still, despite the simplicity and frequency of this mode of pacification it had not altogether proved permanently efficacious. The survivors had taken refuge with others less unfortunate, and the natural recuperative power of people and soil soon removed all traces of the process.

To the poet Spenser—the sweet singer of pastoral joys and sylvan scenery—must be given the credit of advocating, in black and white, a method that thoroughly and extensively carried out would certainly have the effect of pacifying those subjected to it. The simple plan of creating famine and ensuring pestilence; so that the people would greatly consume themselves

²⁷ Leland.

and devour one another ! Spenser (whose memory as a landgrabber and oppressor is still execrated in the south) had frequent cause for strong feelings of resentment against the Irishry, and wrote without responsibility : but that English officials should seriously contemplate acting on the lines indicated by him would be inconceivable were it not that there is no incident in history of which clearer proof is forthcoming.

The execution was worthy of the plan, and English armies—or rather armies in English pay ; for even in this the Queen's Irish appear—as they went drove the whole country before them, and by that means they preyed and took all the cattle, horses, sheep, and goats. and destroyed the growing and garnered crops, so that, having no means of subsistence left, the people were driven to die by the sword, or perish from famine.²⁸

Neither man, woman, nor child was spared. Cupidity was forgotten : corpses were preferred to great ransoms. Obese wolves roamed unmolested where none but skeletons represented the nobler animal. The animal instinct to preserve life, and the maternal instinct to shield one's young, were both lost. Old and young voluntarily sought death. Mothers eat their offspring to avoid it.

The authors and perpetrators of these atrocities were not required to excuse or justify them. To them, and their superiors, the Irish were rebels, and the doom which had overtaken them was the punishment for rebellion : rebellion which had been nearly successful.

²⁸ Leland.

It must not be inferred that the attempts to Anglicise Ireland described in this chapter followed one another in chronological sequence, or were the results of a policy bequeathed by one Lord Deputy to another. Frequently these officials were powerless either to alter the old or originate a new policy. The treatment meted out to the Irish depended on the state of the foreign political barometer, and the vigour of their resistance at home. Intervals of toleration, even direct encouragement, alternated with periods of devastating war, and negotiations to gain time. But underlying both toleration and repression lay the main, and never forgotten, purpose of the Elizabethan governors of Ireland—to root out the Irish, appropriate their lands, and people them with English or foreign Protestants.

THE RELIGIOUS QUESTION.

Amidst the countless events which constitute the life of a nation those in which the question of religion plays a part are the most inexplicable and difficult to assign reasons for. In the case of the Irish people, and the attempt to introduce the reformed doctrines, explanation becomes more than ordinarily difficult. Had the Irish persisted in the path entered upon in the early stages of the dispute, they would, like the neighbouring nations, have arrived at the goal of separation from Rome. For reasons which we purpose indicating, they resolutely retraced their steps, proceeded in the opposite direction, and attained a height of doctrinal solidarity round which the waves of dissent have since beaten in vain.

Although this national change of attitude took place above 300 years ago it still presents a more than academic interest. Some of the reasons for it still exist, and, as they have already influenced the history of the country, will, in all probability, continue to do so.

It is customary to deny any retrograde movement on the part of the Irish ; or else to account for it by attributing to them a national and racial bias towards one form only of religious belief. Explanations, which betray ignorance of former Irish relations with Rome ; ignore the fact that as far as the majority of the nation

were concerned it was the outward form only that was in dispute; and are quite oblivious of the circumstance that other nations likewise experienced a counter reformation, though possibly not to the same degree. Explanations also that, designedly or ignorantly, tend to embitter a controversy that has raged for generations, and, like the maelstrom, attracted everything within its vortex with a power unknown to other disputes.

In the 16th century continuous intercourse had kept alive common customs, speech, and ideas between the Gaels of Ireland and Scotland. They were practically the one people, changes due to a different environment not being then very marked. Yet the clans were easily moved to a change of ritual greater, in the case of their gloomy Calvinism, than the tolerant Episcopalianism which found its way into Ireland. The superstitious mysticism, held to be particularly an attribute of the Celtic character inclining them to Catholicism, has nowhere remained so free from outside influences as in Wales and Cornwall. Now, the measure of opposition to sacerdotalism in those parts is found in the purity of their descent from Celtic forefathers.

FORMER IRISH RELATIONS WITH ROME.—However willing we may be to admit to the fullest extent the authority claimed by ancient documents, or the factious appeals of mediæval Irish prelates in conflict with the secular power, for the dependance upon Rome of the Irish Church, it is impossible to deny that Church had for centuries claimed independence in matters affecting ritual, and objected to one at least of the Five Articles, viz., "That Peter and Peter's

successors . . . are supreme rulers in the Church." This claim had not been relinquished until just previous to the invasion, when the arrival of some monks of the Cistercian Order, as agents of the Papacy, led to the epochal Synod at Kells, and to the incorporation of the Irish with the Roman Church. At this period the Irish paid neither tithes nor first fruits, and religion was said to be nearly extinct.¹

Next in point of time comes the Synod of Cashel, the proceedings at which certainly do not lend colour to the claim that the Irish Church was always the faithful daughter of Rome, otherwise the necessity for such articles as payment of tithes, freedom of Church possessions from exactions, clerical exemptions, and the partitioning estates of deceased persons, is not apparent. The decrees of this Synod (the summoning of which forms the first instance of the exercise in Ireland of supreme authority by an English monarch) partly proved a dead letter, for it was not until after the visit of Papal legates, in the opening year of the following century, that tithes were collected, and the relations between clergy and laity finally settled.

From the Norman invasion to the Reformation period the Irish Church was in no sense national. It was a political Church, associated, as far as the higher ranks of the clergy were concerned, with Norman and English prelates, frequently non-resident. When they were resident in Ireland, these foreigners were usually men of experience in affairs, capable of taking part in, or wholly, administering the Kingdom; the strengthen-

¹ Nevin's *Ireland*, &c.

ing of the government, rather than the spiritual welfare and ecclesiastical administration of the dioceses, being the purpose of their appointments. Politically expedient as this system was, it became, owing to each new comer being accompanied by numerous clerical *protégés*, all requiring to be provided for, a scandalous injustice to the native clergy, enabling the authorities to give effect to the Statute decreeing that Englishmen of good conversation and sufficiency were to be preferred to vacant benefices before Irishmen. Though this Statute remained unrepealed until the 16th century, Irishmen occasionally attained prelacies and the charge of conventual establishments, and not infrequently proceeded to exercise a similar discrimination in the bestowal of livings and benefices, as custom and law sanctioned, in the case of foreigners. The racial jealousy which naturally ensued may be inferred from the case of Mellifont, the most important abbey in Ireland, which at one time admitted no person unless he made oath he was not of English birth or descent.² The Reformation produced but little, if any, alleviation in this system of differential treatment, for in the year 1537 the new Defender of the Faith and dispenser of patronage, prohibited those using the Irish tongue from receiving preferment in the Church of which he was the head. As a result the Sees, when they were filled at all, were held by non-resident prelates, or were the subject of an arrangement between the Crown and the local chiefs or nobles.³

² Cox.³ Carew MSS.

Though the degree of dependance of the Irish Church upon the Papacy may be matter of dispute, there can be no question that prior to the Reformation period the Irish in all matters of racial interest found the Popes on the side of England. Time after time Papal Bulls and exhortations counselled submission to the domination of an alien Government. To maintain that this counsel meant simply the acceptance of the suzerainty of the larger country, and not the abandonment of their nationality, is to ignore patent facts. Whilst to contend that it was in this light the Irish received the Papal monitions is to presume on the intelligence of the person addressed. To be historically accurate, the occasions when the Popes supported the Irish against the invaders or their descendants, began in the 16th century, and then only as a means towards recatholicising England.

OTHER FACTORS.—Though under these circumstances the Irish would have been justified in treating coldly Romish pretensions, in other matters they had less reason to be dissatisfied with the existing religious atmosphere than either of the sister countries. They had so far experienced nothing approximating to the Lollard movement, nor had the largely unauthenticated, though universally credited, stories of the long continued corruption, ignorance, and evil living of the clergy excited their hatred and contempt as in those countries.

Nothing approaching the appalling immorality charged against the Scottish Cistercian Order in Cardinal Sermoneta's letter to Paul IV. (1536) has

been, as far as can be ascertained, attributed to the Irish establishments of that Order, of which there were several. Instances where the domestic history of Irish religious houses have come down to us disclose that when they escaped becoming simply secular they became, though still retaining outward forms and ceremonies, practically irreligious. The same causes that prevented Ireland experiencing the differences of opinion and conflicts of authority, prevalent during the Catholic revival in the centuries immediately preceding the Reformation, also prevented her experiencing the unnatural strictness of life and conduct which found their expression in the rules of some religious orders. From their proximity and greater intercourse with the countries in which dissatisfaction with the doctrines and pretensions of Rome were most rampant, England and Scotland, again, were more likely to be affected than a country whose intercourse with the Continent was mainly through clerics and scholars, and principally with France and Spain. London, in particular, as its foreign intercourse was the greatest, was said to be more deeply infected with the principles of foreign reformers than the other cities.

Independently of motives of personal aggrandisement, the facility with which the representative classes in England repeatedly transferred their allegiance from one head of the Church to another, could have no counterpart in Ireland. Circumstances were so entirely different. In England the personal influence of the Crown was at its highest, whereas in Ireland it was practically unknown. Had other circumstances been

similar, that this factor would not have been without weight is presumable from the result of the visit of the first Earl of Tyrone, the Lords Desmond, O'Brien of Thomond, Clanricard, and McWilliam to Henry VIII. in London. They returned to their country, highly gratified with the King, and well disposed towards his religion.⁴ Later, as the dispute progressed, the political and dynastic considerations which produced the enthusiasm for Queen Elizabeth personally, had no effect upon the chiefs and friars by whom the Irish were led. Other considerations over-shadowed them. The royal influence, such as it was, vanished, and beyond the Pale probably was never mentioned, or regarded as an inducement to accept the State form of religion. As a matter of fact, the sovereignty of Ireland was offered to both French and Spanish monarchs during her reign.

If the absence of royal influence militated against the introduction of the reformed principles, the want of a commanding personality was also felt. Ireland has never produced a religious reformer of any mark. Looking to the character of her people it would be safe to predict that an Irish Luther, Calvin, or Knox, would have exercised an influence greater than that exercised in their respective countries by these leaders.

Partly owing to its dependance upon England, and partly to its comparatively unknown language, Ireland, previous to the promulgation of the Act of Supremacy, received but little assistance in the religious dispute from a source whence other countries derived con-

⁴ O'Driscoll.

siderable. Nearly all the current polemical literature was in English or Latin, had been imported by Catholics, and advocated the pretensions of the Papacy. Various devices were necessarily resorted to, to obtain admittance for such as was current. One consignment arrived in barrels purporting to contain salted fish. Another, the translation of a Spanish catechism, waited for five years before an opportunity for landing it occurred.

The vicissitudes marking the circulation of the Bible and Testament in England naturally affected their dissemination in Ireland. After a period of toleration their circulation was forbidden. Again tolerated, they were again still more strictly suppressed. Finally, in Elizabeth's reign, all restrictions were removed. In the year 1550, an effort was made to provide the Irish with copies of the Scriptures and the English service book in Gaelic, but the instructions were not carried out. Twenty-years later, type in the Gaelic character was supplied by order of the Queen for the same purpose, but was used to print a catechism and religious poem only. Ten years later still, the Catholics issued a version of the New Testament in the native vernacular, but no trace can be found of its circulation in Ireland, whereas a small catechism printed at Louvain had a fair circulation. The statement of the Irish Prelates in the petition to the Pope, that heretical books to poison the minds of the multitude had been circulated, refers probably to the dissemination among the townsmen of the works of the Protestant Bishop of Ossory, or a Lutheran

translation of the New Testament current in England for years before any attempt to make it known in the sister country was made; for it was only in the year 1592 that William Kearney, by order of the Privy Council, printed and issued an Irish Testament.

ECCLESIASTICAL PROPERTIES. — Though thus differing in many respects from countries in which the new ideas had taken firm root, in so far as they appealed to the cupidity of her ruling classes, Ireland offered an easier, if not as lucrative, a field of exploitation.

In addition to the usual Sees and prebends scattered throughout the country, there were between six and seven hundred monastic and collegiate establishments having endowments or properties of some sort. Many of them dated from pre-invasion times, others were due to the liberality of the Norman-Gaelic nobles. About one-third belonged to the Austin Friars, with the Cistercians next in ownership. All the Sees had lands appropriated for their support, and some of the cathedrals and monasteries had large accumulations of portable property. The bells, chalices, and plate of one, was said to have been worth seven thousand pounds; an immense sum for the country and period.

That the opportunities for plunder afforded by the clouding of the ecclesiastical horizon were not neglected is admitted, for before even the Act of Supremacy gave a quasi-legal pretext, instances had occurred where temporalities had been seized with the connivance of the civil authorities, and retained in defiance of ex-communications from Rome. The majority of the

territorial magnates, landed proprietors, and officials, Irish and Anglo-Irish, taking advantage of the prevalent confusion, had seized ecclesiastical lands or merged them in secular properties, and appropriated the revenues. Others, according to the recognised methods, had openly obtained grants of church properties. In some districts churches and ministers had disappeared, and the provision made for their maintenance appropriated or wasted. In others again, the tithe or glebe lands had been farmed out, and the stipends remaining to the clergy were too small for bare subsistence.

When not actually participators in the plunder, the clergy frequently used the opportunity for their personal benefit. One abbot, foreseeing the coming storm, made a great parade of surrendering the property of his abbey to the King, and was rewarded with a bishopric. The first Protestant Archbishop was strenuous in persuading an Irish Parliament to grant the King the twentieths of the revenues and annual rents of secular livings, abbeys, and religious houses.

Resulting from these spoliations, not from the change in religious supremacy alone, the ownership of church lands was often concealed, and it became a common speculation to obtain patents for the grant of such lands upon discovering them. Yet, instances were not infrequent, of religious houses enjoying their revenues and privileges for some time after the Reformation; more particularly in the north where, owing to the slender hold of the English on the

districts of Tyrone, Tyrconnell, and Fermanagh, some houses escaped confiscation until the end of the century.⁵ Later still, it was alleged, there were sixteen monasteries and their occupants still existing in Ulster, and in the year 1617 a perpetual chantry in the County Meath was found in the possession of land.

CONDITION OF RELIGION.—The Elizabethan Irish professed the Christian faith of a spirit and form much anterior to that of their period. Among the lower orders some ancient paganistic practices and customs had not been entirely eradicated. Others, had been grafted on to the purer faith which succeeded paganism. Consequently, their religion may be said to have differed from that of the Latin nations to the extent their former heathenism varied from that in vogue amongst those nations. The educated classes professed a Catholicism reminiscent of the previous century; free from the cruel and blood-thirsty intolerance of counter reformation bigotry, but untouched by the freedom of thought the renaissance of art and learning let loose in Europe.

Where all the Irish more particularly differed from contemporary peoples was, in their unbounded belief in, and reliance upon, prophecies. Learning did not hesitate to devise, nor ecclesiastical authority to expedite, the propagation of prophecies irreconcilable with the teachings of Christianity, but eminently calculated to mislead a people nationally inclined to belief in the supernatural.

The state of spiritual destitution in which the greater

⁵ Sir J. Davis.

portion of the people existed, now appears incredible. The secular clergy were few and far between, and more often than not a reproach and a byeword for neglect. The great monastic establishments had absorbed nearly the whole of the church property and endowments left untouched by the laity, as well as the functions of the secular clergy. Becoming unwilling, in time, to attend to the religious care and instruction of the people themselves, they had rendered the existence of any parish clergy a matter of difficulty, and the duration of the edifices in which they should have ministered a matter of time, not remote. Consequently no parochial organisation was in force. In the majority of districts, parish priests did not exist, and where they did, had nothing to live upon but the offerings or altarages of their flocks.

Religious education and the conduct of divine worship, except amongst the retinues and families of chiefs and nobles, was in the hands of the Mendicant friars. In fastnesses and inaccessible bogs these begging friars, similar in habits and origin to the bulk of those they ministered to, were the only religious pastors and masters of the 16th century Irishry. Little better than outcasts themselves they still maintained in their own rude way the feeble spirit of religion,⁶ and to them, and them only, were the mass of the people indebted for religious consolation and offices at the great epochs of life. Need we wonder, that Englishmen accustomed to the regular parochial system of their own country stood aghast at the religious destitution they

⁶ Carew MSS.

encountered in Ireland, and doubted if even the ceremony of baptism was known to the lower orders of its inhabitants.

It is difficult when considering the facts of every day life in Elizabethan Ireland not to entertain a doubt whether the national faith had then succeeded in influencing the national temperament. The absence of the religious element, afterwards so apparent in the national life and history, is particularly noticeable. Invocations to the Virgin Mary and Saints are met with, and references to persecutions and the religious dispute, common enough, become more so towards the end of the century, but the introduction of religion as a fundamental constituent in the national character was the result of circumstances yet undreamt of.

IRISH PARTICIPATION IN THE DISPUTE.—Thus situated with regard to religion and its accessories, there is nothing surprising in the statement that before the political pressure in Elizabeth's reign became acute, not only was there no appearance, among the Irish, of the religious fervour, afterwards so prevalent, but most Irishmen of eminence, and the majority of the classes whose opinions and doings were of sufficient importance to be recorded, appeared inclined to follow the English lead by subscribing to the submissions and engagements renouncing the Papal and recognising the royal supremacy. Moreover, for several years after the dates of these documents, a tendency to agree with their object and intentions, as well as a toleration of the reformed principles, could be detected amongst the superior classes. There were

exceptions of course. The most notable, the Archbishop of Armagh, and the clergy amenable to his jurisdiction. But of such slight importance was their action considered, that no notice was taken of it, and the Archbishop died in the possession of his See.

From 1535, when the earliest "Engagements" to resist papal pretensions occur, until the last decade of the century, there is an unending record of nobles, chiefs, and towns, renouncing the spiritual and recognising the temporal supremacy; promising to refrain from countenancing Romish bishops or priests;⁷ maintain the official church, and further the contents of the official book of common prayer. In one "Engagement" of this year, the names of two of the great Butler family, the Earl of Ossory, and Sir. James Butler, are found. Still more conclusive is an Indenture of the year 1542, given at length in the Carew MSS., wherein the leading nobles and chiefs of the Province of Munster repeat the admission of supremacy, and agree to annihilate the usurped primacy of the Bishop of Rome. Parliamentary acquiescence was not wanting also. Though the proceedings of the Parliament of 1536 are not quoted, on the ground of its non-representative composition, beyond mentioning that they support the general tendency, the same reason does not apply to that of 1556. This, though willing to reappropriate the ecclesiastical revenues rejected by Queen Mary, declined to restore lands granted to, or annexed by, individuals.

⁷ Carew MSS., MacGeohegan.

One instance of individual agreement is well worth noticing. Gerald, Earl of Desmond, in the course of one of his frequent arrangements with the Lord Deputy and Council, when admitting "that as to the furtherance of religion in Munster, though he had no knowledge in learning and was ignorant of what was to be done in that behalf," agreed, "to aid and maintain whatever was appointed by commissioners named for the purpose."⁸ Though this display of ignorance was probably an evasion, the Earls' readiness to conform to the government standard betrays an openness of mind in strong contrast to the fanaticism displayed by a successor in the title.

Catholic writers admit that after the death of Shane O'Neill, the reformed doctrines began to take root in Ireland. Though O'Neill's own orthodoxy was not considered beyond question until he had burnt down the Protestant church in Armagh,⁹ he was the militant champion of Romanism, and this admission really means that the new doctrines on his removal asserted themselves in the districts he had before controlled, either personally or through sub-chiefs. Of another chief of the O'Neills and Catholic leader, Hugh, the great Earl of Tyrone, a personal friend wrote, "True it is he is affected that way (to Romanism), but less hurtful and dangerous than some of the greatest in the English Pale, for when he is with the State he will accompany the Lord Deputy to the Church and home again, and will stay and hear service and sermon."¹⁰

⁸ Taaffe.⁹ O'Driscoll.¹⁰ Captain Lee.

Indications of the spirit which at first actuated the Towns may be found in the fact that many of the most important, including Limerick and Galway (afterwards so well known for their steadfast adherence to the prescribed faith), took the oath of supremacy and renounced the Papal authority. Of all instances of toleration the most fraught with meaning is, that after the renewal of the Heresy Acts by Queen Mary, many English Protestant families took refuge in Irish towns, and there practised a ritual and professed opinions that in their native places would probably have consigned them to the stake. Creditable to the towns concerned as this spirit of toleration was, it is more indicative of sympathy with the views of the fugitives than of endurance by one sect of the heresies of another.

The position taken up by those Catholic clergy of the new Irish party who adhered to the English interest was, that they considered it lawful to assist the Queen, even though in so doing they acted in opposition to their co-religionists. This attitude appeared so irreconcilable with the actualities of the situation, that the matter was referred to the Pope. In reply, the Royalist clergy were commanded not only to abstain from opposing the Irish chiefs but to assist them. A decision said to have been obtained by false representations, and on this ground referred to the Spanish Universities. By them the Pope's decision was supported and republished.

FOREIGN INFLUENCES.—Interested in preventing the secession of the Irish were the Powers still in

communion with Rome, the Vatican itself, and the native Romanist hierarchy.

Spain may be regarded as representing the Powers. She promised much, but the performance (excluding sundry munificent gifts of money) was not proportionate to her immense resources, and amounted to the despatch at intervals of ships with ammunition and ecclesiastics, and several expeditions. These varied in numbers from the small ill-fated one at Smerwick, to the comparatively large force which landed at Kinsale. All were badly conceived, ill-found, and worse managed.

The action of the Vatican in some respects was equally ineffective. In fulfilment of promises of money, ships, and men, made to the Confederates, a force of about one thousand men (brigands who had previously pestered Italy¹¹ and been pardoned on condition of serving in the expedition) was despatched under the leadership of the notorious Thomas Stukeley. Instead of proceeding straight to Ireland, Stukeley joined the Portugese in an African expedition, in which he and the majority of his men were killed; the remainder reached Ireland and perished at Smerwick or during Fitzmaurice's operations. In addition to material assistance of this nature, the Irish themselves were incited to take up arms by promises of absolution to those who actually did so, and their posterity to the third generation.¹² At the same time the newly-

¹¹ O'Sullivan Beare.

¹² Taaffe, *Letter from Rome*, 1580.

founded colleges in the Peninsula were, in conjunction with the College of Valladolid, moved to issue a decree, "that any Irish Catholic joining the standard of an heretical and excommunicated Queen incurred the everlasting penalties of mortal sin." That despite promises and threats, there must have remained some trimmers and lukewarm partisans is evident from a communication by the Roman Catholic Bishop of Cork and Vicar Apostolic to Lord Barrymore, when the Spaniards were at Kinsale, that he had received an excommunication from the Pope against all those who abstained from joining the Catholic action.

No doubt, the political schemes in which the Popes were engaged would, had the expected results been attained, have effected advantageous diversions in favour of the Irish. Nevertheless the fact remains that in these schemes the Irish were but pawns in a game in which their interests were subordinated to other and more congenial ones.

Characteristically prone as the Irish were to look with suspicion upon anything emanating from English sources, references by native clerics to the divisions in the Church usually took the form of appeals to this feeling. Early in the dispute rumours were circulated that a new heresy, the effect of pride, vain glory, avarice, desire, &c., had broken out in England; that in the course of it the heretics had ruined the Orders holding worldly possessions, and their property had been seized by the King.¹³ Later, it was asserted the

¹³ O'Leary, from *The Four Masters*.

schism was really an attempt to impugn the chastity of the Virgin Mary. Appeals to the prejudices of the people, in the form of information concerning the Queen's birth and legitimacy; comments upon the law making any natural issue of her's lawful heir to the throne; and, most effective weapon of all, copies of the Bull of Pius V. excommunicating the Queen, were extensively circulated. A proof of Irish ignorance concerning, and unfamiliarity with, Papal Bulls may be gathered from this being considered sacrosanct, and used to administer oaths upon.¹⁴

Whatever the effect upon the lower orders of these unusual polemical arguments may have been, the Romanist clerics did not rely upon them alone with the classes. To influence these, they stimulated or created an attitude of hostility towards any Governmental measures that by a process of distortion or perversion could be considered to menace their privileges or properties. Not omitting at the same time to picture in strong relief the favourable situation, shown in the popular distrust, for harassing a Government now branded with the epithet of heretical.

FOREIGN CLERICS.—Though the truth of the remark that nationalism, in the modern conception of the term, was unknown to the Elizabethan Irish cannot be denied, that they possessed a large measure of local and racial feeling is indisputable. They were, as a matter of fact, intensely clannish. The expansion of this local into national feeling was possible; and religion, if anything, was capable of effecting it. Yet,

¹⁴ *Life of R. MacCarthy More.*

in the matter of spiritual direction, both Rome and London appear to have missed realising the possibilities latent in a recognition of this exclusiveness. A want of perception which eventually cost both dearly.

At periods when the necessity for the best of the native clergy to be in spiritual charge of their countrymen was not so evident, the Vatican had not hesitated to compel the return to Ireland, from the Continent, of Irish clerics holding prelacies or filling University chairs. Nevertheless, at the height of the struggle, when the Continent sheltered a sufficient number of eminent Irishmen to fill all their native Sees, a Spaniard was appointed Archbishop of Dublin, and the conduct of affairs, and management of intrigues, entrusted to English and Spanish clerics. As a result, incalculable harm was done the Catholic cause. To take one instance only, Desmond's rebellion was said to have failed principally because the management of it was entrusted to foreigners.

The efforts, such as they were, of the other side were in no whit more happily directed. Able and eloquent preachers, English and Scotch, were selected, and—lacking the gift of tongues—sent on their mission. Ignorant of the language; strangers to the manners and habits of the people; and unprovided with the necessary literature; their mission naturally proved a failure.

So evident was the futility of despatching only English-speaking clerics into the Irish-speaking districts, that Lord Deputy Sidney protested against it, but without effect. The practice was continued until,

as in the case of Bishop Daly (appointed to the See of Kildare), it became a subject of special reference when any of the Queen's clerical nominees were able to use the native tongue.

Had the absence of linguistic capacity been the only objection to the official clergy the matter would probably have attracted less attention. But the glaring unsuitability in character and previous pursuits of many selected ministers is beyond belief. Horse boys, and menials ; any man of bad repute provided only that he was an Englishman, were, it is said, preferred before natives eligible in every respect. In several instances the only discernible qualification for appointment to bishoprics and other dignities was that the new incumbents were Protestants. A trio of bishops, Lyon, Sheehan, and Dixon, appointed at this period, are still considered to have been the worst men ever raised to the episcopal dignity in Ireland. Against the scandal of these and similar unsuitable appointments Lord Deputy Perrott also protested. As usual in vain.

OFFICIAL METHODS.—Had the Ministers of the Crown been sincerely desirous of compelling or persuading the Irish to conform to the new ecclesiastical system, they had at their disposal in the influence and example of the popular leaders a power fraught with immense possibilities of obtaining their object. They knew that every sentiment dominating the people would incline them to follow the lead or bow to the influence of these leaders, and that in any event their conformity would do far more than scores of official

orders and enactments. At first this course appears to have commended itself to the ruling powers. Later it fell into disfavour, and opportunities were neglected or subordinated to the exigencies of official administration.

The Earl of Desmond, whose harsh treatment has been already described, owed his release to a promised compliance with, among others, the usual condition of substituting the royal for the papal supremacy. The breach of faith in rearresting him was therefore calculated to, at least, afford a pretext for evading this condition. Among other instances where political ends were preferred to religious conformity we find Shane O'Neill after his visit to the Queen, returned to Ireland in great favour. So far from inducing him to promote the Protestant movement, it was intimated he would be allowed to nominate the Primate. A proceeding equivalent to the suppression of that cause in the north. Probably to some secret arrangement of this nature was due the appointment of Miler Magrath (foster? brother to Shane) as Protestant Archbishop of Cashel. An appointment that discredited the Protestant hierarchy more than any other selection during the Queen's reign. Lord Fitzwilliam, when Deputy, was instructed to inform the Earls of Clanricard and Desmond that if they would acknowledge their obedience as in former times, they might have their own way in other matters, *i.e.*, religion. The most convincing instance of the subordination of the religious to the political question occurred when the Queen was willing to dispense with the oath of

supremacy from the inhabitants of the Pale. Culpably neglectful though ministers had been in these instances, in their scornful rejection of the claims of chiefs and nobles to be considered in the final distribution of ecclesiastical properties they threw away another means of compelling or obtaining uniformity. Some of them had already received or appropriated Church properties no doubt, but this did not lessen their resentment when the bulk of the spoil passed into the hands of English officials and settlers.

The same lack of political insight was observable in the ordinary administrative measures. Provincial authorities, when taking up their appointments, were instructed—in the diction of pre-reformation days—to maintain the rights of holy Church, defend its ministers, and keep in order its places of worship. Though there could be no doubt as to which Church was meant, the disgraceful condition of many nominally Protestant churches testified to some freedom of construction. They were also instructed to procure the recognition of the Sovereign as head of the Church; to continue the suppression of Romanist establishments and the creation of Protestant free schools; and were empowered to compel attendance at the reformed services and the new schools, by the enforcement of penalties for non-compliance.

Whatever effect these measures may have produced in the towns, to the native Irish they were simply provocative. They knew neither English language nor law. Nor could they possibly attend services and schools, existent only in official documents. In brief,

whether intended to counteract Romish intrigues or facilitate conversion, the means employed were equally useless, justifying the assertion, they were contrived merely to satisfy the Queen and her English advisers.

RELIGIOUS PERSECUTION.—When forming an opinion upon the much vexed question of religious persecutions said to have occurred during the Elizabethan period, it is advisable to keep before us, that much now termed a matter of conscience, was then considered political; and a great deal now dealt with by criminal law, was then within the cognisance of ecclesiastical courts only. Moreover, toleration in religious affairs, as we now understand the term, was a thing then unknown. To in any way countenance a difference in religious opinions, whether they were of Rome or Geneva, was alike with compounding a felony. It was a crime in itself. In the case of the Elizabethan Irishry, though we may be morally certain that had not the Royal Ministers been confronted with a series of rebellions Romanism would have been stamped out by cruel and arbitrary measures proof that such measures were employed, to the extent alleged, is far from convincing. Several cases, where it was said the victims suffered for performing priestly functions refusing to take the oath of supremacy, or belonging to conventual establishments; cases which imply undue severity, or by their nature stand apart from political offences; have in the recording become so interlarded with fabulous details as to seriously diminish their value as evidence. There is furthermore the improbability, if any widely spread or severe per-

secution had taken place that when, by the fortune of war, Protestants fell into Catholic hands the latter would not have retaliated. That they did not is certain, otherwise the statement that during the 16th century the Irish Roman Catholics were the only sect that resumed power without exercising vengeance would not have passed unchallenged. Finally, the conduct of the Irish troops, even when intoxicated with success, shows no trace of the savage bitterness imported into the struggle some forty years later.

An admission by the Catholics of the Queen's party, made subsequent to the outbreak of general hostilities, that there was no persecution of priests at that time, while supporting the fact of persecutions reduces considerably the period during which the occurred. That several Bishops and priests were put to death, some during, and others in retaliation for, the incessant insurrections attributed to the intrigues of Rome is undeniable. On the other hand the persecution of laymen, mentioned in the Catholic history usually amounted to enforced attendance at reformed services, and the payment of fees. A form of compulsion ; taken in conjunction with the unusually light punishments inflicted on Catholics for beating new ministers and perpetrating minor sacrileges ; going far to prove that until the struggle between the two supremacies was aggravated by political differences the Island enjoyed a fair measure of religious freedom. Beyond the towns the professed faith of the mass of the people being but little interfered with.

The Baltinglass rebellion, with its tragic sequel, was

said to have been caused by the harsh enforcement of the laws against Catholics. An assertion deriving support from the leaders taking refuge in Spain. But these leaders—with one exception (O'Byrne) Norman-Gaelic, or Anglo-Irish, from the Pale and its borders—had been engaged some years previously in seditious opposition to Sidney's taxation scheme. A circumstance calculated to cast suspicion upon the probability of dissatisfaction with developments of a religious nature being the sole cause of the revolt.

FINAL ATTITUDE OF THE IRISH.—The contention so often advanced that a position of hostility towards any ecclesiastical change characterised the Irish throughout the dispute is not tenable. Too many interests and questions were involved in the acceptance or rejection of a change in the ecclesiastical supremacy to permit a decided and permanent attitude being observed from the commencement. Naturally, there was considerable wavering and many changes, some lasting, others transient. The compass and effect of these defections and vacillations amongst the leaders particularly (their action and that of the towns being capable of direct proof) will be perceived from a series of comparisons.

Contrast the terms of the numerous - signed Engagements of 1535 and 1542, and the submissions subscribed later by divers chiefs, with the principal article in the conditions of peace repeatedly tendered to the English Commissioners by the great Earl of Tyrone—he who was so little of a bigot as to stay and hear service and sermon—viz., that there should

be no other religion throughout the kingdom of Ireland but the Catholic, Apostolic, and Roman. In 1599 another condition was added to the effect, that the Church properties, since the commencement of heresy and schism, annexed to the King's demesnes should be restored to the Church, as well by the Queen herself as by the individuals who possessed them. Compare the number and names of the signatories to the different Engagements and Submissions with the fact that after the Queen's death six only of the twenty-five Irish temporal peers were Protestants. Compare further the latitudinarianism of that Earl of Desmond, who prided himself on his theological ignorance, with the spirit and matter of his successor's communication to the King of Spain, "I have reclaimed all the nobility of this part of Ireland (south and south-west) under the dutiful obedience of Christ's Church." There could be no reclamation without a previous loss, and the extent of that loss is furnished by the documents already quoted.

Beyond indicating the revulsion of feeling that did take place, these comparisons are too general and pronounced not to be attributable to some clearly discernible cause. That cause was the inaptitude, politically and socially, of the greater part of the country when the contemplated change was attempted. The elementary condition that internal peace, resulting from a settled and universally accepted form of Government, should precede or accompany drastic changes in the ecclesiastical system had been disregarded from the first. Later, mal-administration

of domestic affairs resulted in the exploitation of religious differences. The Queen's Ministers endeavoured to prosecute, simultaneously, a policy of conversion, and a system of extermination; the former perfunctorily, the latter determinedly. To ensure the Irish becoming orthodox in this world, they hurried them into the next. To instil sentiments of charity and fraternity, they practised confiscation and oppression.

Before Protestantism reached the Irish, as a religious force it was spent; had degenerated into a political movement, and as such became synonymous with English statecraft. This, by alarming the Irish, produced in its turn a general atmosphere of racial distrust. Between ordinary communities this feeling would have retarded the spread from one to another of vital changes in the form of religious observances. But in the case of a long-memoried and unchangeable people like the Irish, its acceptance was rendered impossible.

IRISH SOLDIERS AND ELIZABETHAN WARFARE.

The closing years of the 16th century saw Ireland in the throes of a struggle, the immense importance of which few now realise. The Irish confederates embarked on the conflict with a fair prospect of success. They emerged from it defeated and subjugated.

Not the least of the advantages formerly resulting from the victorious prosecution of a war was, that the victors version of the occurrences was that usually accepted by the world at large: the defeated being seldom in a position to make themselves heard. In the case of the Elizabethan Irish, this was particularly the case. One of the results of their defeat being the interdiction of their language and literature. So that their records; of years of heroic efforts and incredible sufferings; of victories gallantly gained and defeats stubbornly borne; have either remained practically unknown, or are deemed unworthy of credit when alluded to.

The principal histories, in a literary sense, of the Elizabethan wars—in the language now common to the descendants of both combatants—have, naturally, emanated from the victorious side. Some of them are merely pegs upon which to hang a literary reputation. Of others, Irishmen may complain that animated by racial and religious antipathies the writers have

not only defamed the dead, but provided means to insult the living. The Irish versions of the events so partially portrayed were either in Latin, or the still less accessible Gaelic. The few persons familiar with them, or their translations, had neither encouragement nor desire to make them public. Consequently, they have been considered, to say the least, apocryphal. That phase has passed and gone. Now, these histories are being read with ever increasing interest by a people proud to find, in the language appealing most strongly to their religious susceptibilities, or that enshrining their nascent feelings of nationality, they possess undoubted proofs that the great military qualities they have been vaguely conscious of are part and parcel of the national heritage.

Voltaire's remark, that the Irish, who showed themselves the bravest soldiers in France and Spain, have always behaved shamefully at home, epigrammatically expresses an opinion generally entertained. For the first half of his assertion, Voltaire was indebted to the letters of his friend D'Argenson. For the latter, to the misrepresentations which had obtained currency through the means we have indicated. In this matter also Lord Macaulay stands out a great, if not the greatest, offender. Not content with alleging the Irish troops displayed cowardice in the campaigns against his hero, King William, he insults the whole nation by insinuating this was a national defect. Now Macaulay professed to be well acquainted with the events of the period immediately preceding the Revolution, and therefore knew, that badly armed, worse organised,

and under indifferent leaders, the fathers of the men whom he brands with cowardice had offered a relatively better resistance to Cromwell's veterans than the Cavaliers or Lowland Scots. And that the brothers and cousins of these cowardly Irish papists were at that very time gaining renown in the armies of Spain and Austria.

Assisting, and in a manner giving colour to, the formation and perpetuation of the inaccuracies regarding Irish military capacity and exploits are the circumstances that previous to the Elizabethan wars the Irish were considered mere foreign auxiliaries, and as such received scant if any mention, and since then, as fractions of English or British forces their nationality has been sunk in those appellations. A similar fate has pursued Irish mercenaries in foreign armies. For with one or two notable exceptions their exploits have usually been merged in the achievements of the nations whose flags they fought under, and not attributed to them distinctively.

EMPLOYMENT OF IRISH SOLDIERS.—Since Crecy, where six thousand Irish footmen were present,¹ the Irish have uninterruptedly fought under the banners of England. Allusions to them in mediæval narratives are not frequent, but from the general compliance by the Norman—Gaelic nobles with the King's orders to attend with their levies, there is no doubt that most, if not all, English armies contained contingents from the Irish estates of those nobles. During the wars of the Roses, the Irish and Norman-Irish nobles, when they

¹ *Graces Annals*

took sides at all, were most frequently Yorkists, and suffered severely in consequence. Later, they were involved in the attempts of the pretenders Simnel and Warbeck. The momentary gleam of success which dazzled the first named impostor on the fatal day at Newark being mainly due to the valour of two thousand Irish among his supporters.

At the siege of Boulogne, Henry VIII. in recognition of the gallantry of Lord Kingsale's regiment of Irish, conferred knighthood on their leader.² During this Henry's reign, a number of Kerne were also sent to England, and eleven hundred of them dispatched to the north, where they subsequently formed part of the brigade of Irish troops in the force which, in the following reign, defeated the Scotch at Musselburgh.

In the orders of the Privy Council for cessing of Irish Kerne for service in the Low Countries, we have indirect testimony to their worth. Whilst in the evidence of military men, who, as antagonists or comrades were qualified to speak from experience, we have the most direct proofs obtainable. Other testimony is that of writers recording their own observations or retailing information derived from military men. In either case a class of witness not likely to err in the direction of excessive appreciation; "I have heard some great warriors say that in all the services which they had seen abroad in foreign countries they never saw a more comely man than the Irishman, nor that comes on more bravely to his

² De Courcy.

charge. One both vigilant and circumspect in enterprises, very present in perils, and great scorers of death.”³ Delighted with wars, good soldiers, well armed, and in blood; ⁴ a rather cryptic opinion. The next is plain enough. In these parts (Carlow) live great numbers of Cavenaghs, good soldiers and famous horsemen.⁵ Sir W. Stanley, writing to the Earl of Leicester of the affair at Zutphen, mentions the good behaviour of his Kernes. Sir W. Raleigh, in a “Discourse touching on war with Spain,” admits that the Irish in the last war were victorious with an equal or even an inferior force. The Earl of Essex (no mean authority) writing to the Queen acknowledged the Irish were stronger and handled their weapons with more skill than the English. One of his officers, Captain Osborne, warns a correspondent in 1599 that though they said in England the Irish were but naked rogues, they found them as good and better men than those sent from England. Lord Mountjoy—the greatest opponent the Elizabethan Irish had to contend against—confessed there were many examples. that when the enemy (the Irish) sally out with two or three thousand men they have defeated armies that have been treble their numbers. Some years later, Sir W. St. Leger, Sergeant Major-General of the army in Ireland, referring to his inspection of nine thousand Irish raised to serve against the Scotch, reports, that they displayed much willingness and aptness in learning their exercises “and that mettle and gallant appearance that, considering how

³ Spenser.⁴ Stanihurst.⁵ Camden.

newly they have been raised, no Prince had for their number a better or more orderly body of men in his service."

About 1587 the Irish, forming one of the four nations of which the Spanish armies on the Continent consisted, were particularly distinguished. Amongst other instances, in the attack on Enghel, they were said, though young soldiers, to have displayed the steadiness of veterans combined with a spirit of gallantry not surpassed, if equalled, by the other troops present.

As was only to be expected from the national character, it is of Irish soldiers in attack commendatory remarks most often occur. That they were no mean foes when on the defensive likewise, was proved on numerous occasions during the 16th century. When appraising their value as defenders it is necessary to recollect, the reduction or capitulation of a fortified place or work in their own country invariably meant the execution of the Irish garrison, so that desperation may possibly have lent courage to the defence. Abroad, this inducement to a resistance to the bitter end was seldom present. During the defence of Louvain against the French and Dutch, a great compliment was paid Preston's Irish when the German commander concluded an address by beseeching his men to prove to the enemy, as well as to the citizens, that Germans were as brave as Irish.⁶ In the defence of Amiens, also, Irish gallantry was particularly mentioned by Davila. Though an insignificant fortress compared

⁶ *Relation du Siège.*

with the force brought against it, Castlemayne took Perrott two monthsto reduce. The stout defence of Glyn Castle attracted some notice also ;⁷ while the defence of Dunboy, where a garrison of one hundred and forty-three men held a single square keep and some inconsiderable outworks against Sir G. Carew and four thousand men for fifteen days,⁸ compared favourably with any defence of the period, and elicited from the very prejudiced English commander the remark, that so obstinate and resolved a defence had not been seen in the kingdom.⁹ Having thus provided some material for doubting the accuracy of the impression complained of, we proceed to describe in detail the troops and their leaders.

SIXTEENTH CENTURY IRISH SOLDIERS were usually classified as Galloglasses, Kernes, and Cavalry. The former were men-at-arms selected for their size and strength. They formed the main battle, as it was termed, of the native forces, were used as body-guards, and employed to garrison fortified places. They appear to have developed and grown into favour through being the only foot soldiers able to withstand the attack of horse, or the heavily armed English foot.

Their equipment consisted of spears, swords, and the distinctive long broad axe called a sparthe ; said to have been adopted from the old Danish invaders. Towards the end of the century a proportionate number of men in each company carried matchlocks in addition to their usual arms. For defensive armour they wore, over a buff jacket, a long chain

⁷ *Pacata Hibernia*.

⁸ *Pacata Hibernia*.

⁹ Moryson.

shirt reaching to the calf of the leg. Although in most descriptions they are represented bare-headed, a head-piece or helmet certainly formed part of their dress. They were mustered and paid in *spars*, a spar including the soldier, his arms bearer, and a boy to carry provisions. Ten marks per annum to each spar was not extravagant remuneration, yet it purchased for the paymasters services and a loyalty generally unquestioned.

During the latter quarter of the century the Privy Council were pestered by rival claimants to the captaincy of the permanent force of three hundred spars of galloglasses in the pay of the Crown, Notwithstanding the position was poorly paid, and involved services which must at times have been distasteful, it was much sought after. All the claimants were Irishmen.

Some of the agreements for providing these men-at-arms give the impression that, unless they were maligned, the Irish chiefs derived a part of their income from the practice; for it was said that as long as money could get men they would never want. Two small septs, the O'Shyies and MacSwynies, were exclusively mercenary soldiers, willing to engage and fight under any banner.

KERNES.—The bulk of all Irish forces were the kernes. They were variously armed. Some had bows and arrows; others swords; others, again, pikes, or more strictly, darts; all carried the deadly skene or long knife. Whenever there was a scarcity of bows and arrows the skene was used like the dart, as a

projectile.¹⁰ The bows and arrows were short, the latter having broad, slender, and sharp heads capable of great penetration. Though relying more upon activity and knowledge of the locality to avoid the onset of cavalry or heavy infantry they each carried targets. From their mobility and preference for fighting in woods, and the occasional references to them as naked pikes—that is, having neither fire-arms nor defensive armour—it is probable bows and arrows were the only projectile weapons with the royal kernes, as they certainly were with the native levies, until towards the close of the century, when a partial change was made.

Moryson, who appears to have entertained some respect for these footmen, knew them before and after the change in their armament. He mentions that at first they were such rude soldiers and so unaccustomed to fire-arms that two or three were employed to fire one piece, but later they became proficient in the management of them, and bold skirmishers in bog and woody passages. This opinion of Moryson's should be read in connection with Sir W. Raleigh's explanation, quoted later, of then recent Irish successes.

The marching powers of the Kernes were great, and activity phenomenal. They were capable also of great endurance and exertions. Their aptness in utilising woods and bogs, or other natural features of the country, was likewise much praised. Trusting to this activity and knowledge of ground, they were

¹⁰ *Pacata Hibernia.*

addicted to, and very daring in, using devices and ruses, not omitting verbal taunts and insulting gestures, to entice the enemy on to unsuitable ground. From contemporary descriptions they seem to have been almost ideal scouts and skirmishers, possessing besides an unusual readiness, not always expected from light troops, to attack any description of foe.

A number of Kernes were in English pay, but the officering of them was not so popular with Anglo-Irish or English gentlemen as was that of the men-at-arms in the same employment.

Accompanying all Irish forces were a species of irregulars, neither soldiers nor camp followers, known as horse-boys. They were armed with darts only, and employed nominally to lead spare horses, carry weapons, and look after the baggage. In some accounts of operations the baggage is said to have been left to the care of unarmed men, probably these irregulars. Indications of their following the attack, at a respectful distance, being particularly active in despatching the wounded or disarmed, and cutting off the heads of the slain, may be detected in these accounts. From other references to beheading the severely wounded as well as the slain and exposing the heads on heights gained during the fight there can be no question of these barbarous practices being common to both belligerents.

Speaking generally, the armament of the Irish was bad; but the Scots in their employ, reckoned usually among the Kernes, were still worse off. As late as the year 1590 their sole weapons consisted of bows

and arrows and double-handed swords. Among the Irish there was no attempt at uniformity of clothing. The immediate attendants of chiefs and leaders were distinctively apparelled; the remainder brought to their military duties such clothing as sufficed for every-day use.

The clothing of the Queen's Irish soldiers was a fruitful source of dispute with the Home Government. At last, Cecil intimated that he would pay for no apparel for the Queen's mere Irish soldiers; for they wore none!

THE IRISH ATTACK.—From the accounts of the period, the attack of the Irish foot must have been particularly trying to young or badly trained foot soldiers. Both galloglasses and kernes trusted for victory to getting to close quarters. The former, steadily and deliberately, as befitted their gigantic stature and heavy armament, moved towards the enemy with flaunting banners, pipes skirling, and trumpets blowing. When near enough, their matchlocks were discharged, the pipes struck up the clan march or some favourite air, their pace quickened, and "mouthing their aboos like bulls bellowing," they dashed upon the opposing ranks. The deadly long axes made short work of any defence other than shot, and their wielders, choosing rather to die than retire, were quickly slain or won the fight. There was less of the pomp and circumstance of war about the kernes. They, dropped as it were from the clouds, a flight of arrows and darts, a shout and the screech of a pipe, then, woe betide the foe if his shot

did not stop their rush or his pikes wavered. Flight would not save them. The kernes could outstrip a horse and pull the rider backwards over the croup. In any case, once the dreaded skene was at work among them the fight was lost.

Pipers; who were of such importance that it was customary to mention them specifically when among the slain; and their instruments, entered largely into the exploits of the Irish foot. Besides inflaming their martial ardour, and urging them on to the attack, the pipers were quick to notice any laggard amongst their own men, afterwards introducing the name of the individual in a metrical account of the affair—a prospect fearful enough to the national character to induce the most reckless bravery.

CAVALRY.—Contrary to what we would expect from the present reputation of the country for horses, the cavalry were the least numerous arm of the Irish, a deficiency due to horses being considered as more properly appertaining to chiefs and captains, and, therefore, not usually kept by the lower orders. Moreover, in most parts the bogs and woods with which the land was so plentifully studded rendered them of but little use, so that, except for sport, they were seldom in request. Generally, the unsuitability of horsemen to their country was the excuse given by the chiefs for the small number they were able to furnish. It is not surprising, therefore, that the districts containing the least number of bogs or woods furnished the best cavalry. Tyrone's finest horsemen were from Coleraine. The O'Reillys of Cavan—

another comparatively thinly wooded country—were for many years distinguished for their cavalry.

Though few, the Irish cavalry were reputed of good quality. A feature all the more noticeable because, riding in their country fashion, they disdained the use of stirrups and the cumbersome saddle of the period. Their offensive weapons were a sword, some darts, and a broad headed blade on a thick strong ash handle, forming a short lance or half pike. The Queen's Irish horsemen wore head pieces and shirts of mail; those of the chiefs usually went bareheaded, and instead of armour wore leathern jackets, each man also carried a target or round shield. Their mode of attack though in principle similar to that of other cavalries differed in details. On approaching the enemy, having hurled their darts, they attacked with the lance, holding it poised by the centre over the right shoulder. Their being without stirrups, and the shortness of the weapon, prevented its being used to unseat the opponent by main force. Notwithstanding this disadvantage, and their want of defensive armour, they did not hesitate to charge the mail-clad English cavalry.

Some of the distances traversed and exploits of the Irish horsemen, would be deemed incredible were they not accounted for by the custom of employing spare horses. Until required, the charger or service horse was usually led by a mounted horse boy, carrying also the baggage and heavy arms of the horseman; the latter bestriding a smaller description of horse.

The absence from military descriptions of native

names for the horse proper seems to infer either, that Englishmen considered the animals known as "garrans"—really cobs or galloways—unfit for military purposes or else they termed all native horses garrans. The former inference derives support from their importing or breeding mounts for their heavily accoutred men. Whatever the cause of the omission, these garrans were hardy, strong, little animals, and, though the name came to imply some measure of inferiority, greatly in request as baggage carriers. From their being also known as "hobby horses" the lightly armed Irish cavalry were known abroad as "hobellers."

MERCENARIES.—The "bonnaghts" or mercenaries in the service of chiefs and nobles were the pick of the Irish troops; under good commanders justifying their reputation as the best furnished and best appointed men for war. To all intents and purposes they were regulars, possessing a better organisation and more uniform and appropriate equipment, than the militia-like clan levies, and ordinary retinues of chiefs and nobles.

The billeting arrangements for Irish mercenaries in the service of the Crown were an unceasing cause of friction with the Anglo-Irish and English residents. Taking advantage of the systems known as bonnaght-bonny, bonnaght-beg, and sorren; by which the Royal troops were maintained by the inhabitants of certain districts, and money payments towards their provision exacted from each ploughland; officials, and others, whose positions enabled them to do so, were accused

of evading their share of these imposts by saddling other towns or districts with it.

Desertions and treachery on the part of the Irish troops were occasionally given as the cause of Royalist disasters. In all probability the cases complained of occurred amongst the levies comprised in the hostings or musters, and not among the mercenaries. Otherwise it is doubtful if, considering the stringent orders of the Queen prohibiting the employment of Irish soldiers, they would have been enlisted in such numbers as they were until the end of the war. Instances of devotion, and loyalty to the death, among the mercenaries, notably the two Irish galloglasses who assisted Sir Conyers Clifford from his last and fatal field, help to support this view.

PAUCITY OF FIRE ARMS, &C.—During the Elizabethan wars the difficulty of obtaining, and objection to wearing, armour by the Irish, appears to have been surmounted, for, though the irregular troops, light horsemen, and kernes, were still lightly accoutred, the leaders, captains, and regular soldiers, were but slightly inferior in defensive equipment to the English. At the same time, the descriptions by native writers of armour worn by the chiefs must be accepted with a certain amount of reservation, compliance with the fashion of employing a more than Persian redundancy of adjectives, rather than literal description appearing to be the writer's object.

Both muskets and cannon were comparatively new to the Irish. Until 1522 they had not used either, and as late as the siege of Carrigfoyle the use of five

cannon was mentioned as something extraordinary. Previous to the battle at the Blackwater, the English commander termed the Irish "naked rebels," thereby implying they were poorly armed. Sir W. Raleigh, writing to Sir R. Cecil, styled them a beggarly nation that have neither arms nor fortifications.

Nearly all the guns and cannon the Irish possessed were captured from the Royalists or presents from abroad. During respites from hostilities, frequent requests for a supply of both were made to the English commanders, but with a shrewd suspicion of their intended employment the requests were seldom complied with.

To obtain the lead he had at the commencement of hostilities, the Earl of Tyrone resorted to the fiction that he was importing it for the roof of his new castle. At one time he had but a single cannon, and most of his ammunition came from the clergy in Spain; a source which does not point to a very large supply.¹¹ Various proofs of unaccustomedness to fire arms, especially cannon, by native troops are given, amongst them that during Tyrone's operations in the north many of the clansmen were new to, and entertained a dread of, the great ordnance of the English.

This want of guns and ammunition, with the absence of gunners (whenever these are mentioned they are said to be Spaniards or Italians), from which the Irish suffered, retarded their operations considerably, and was responsible for their occasionally declining to defend castles or towns. Newark Castle, and others

¹¹ *State Papers*; Hatfield MSS.

built by the chiefs, fell into the hands of the Royalists and formed objective points for both combatants all through the wars, but the deficiencies mentioned which brought about their loss, effectually precluded the Irish again acquiring them. Tyrone on several occasions evacuated towns through not having sufficient cannon or ammunition to defend them with. The Earl of Desmond likewise, about the end of the century, informed the King of Spain that his inability to reduce castles and fortified places was from want of cannon and powder, "which his country did not yield." After the disaster at Kinsale the castle of Dunboy, held under the terms of capitulation by the Spaniards for the Royalists, was surprised by its rightful owner, The O'Sullivan. The absence of skilled gunners amongst the Irish is evident from O'Sullivan having retained the "cannoneers," and released the remainder of the garrison.

The necessity for retaining, while preventing the Irish acquiring, the advantages derived from the possession of firearms was always an object with the Privy Council. Under any circumstances it was difficult for the chiefs to obtain these essentials to resistance, but when, by the operation of administrative orders, the risk and expense of importing them outweighed the probable profit, the source of supply became restricted to that from foreigners. One of the mistakes (said to have proved the most fatal) attributed to Sir John Perrott was giving the Ulster Irish the possession, and teaching them the use, of English weapons. Spenser, and Camden also.

remarked on the impolicy of habituating the natives to the use of firearms, thereby abandoning the advantage formerly had over them. Sir W. Raleigh's explanation of the change which came over the military relations of the two peoples when this advantage had been lost, expresses the matter clearly. Referring to the period when he was serving as a captain he writes, "I remember also when one hundred foot and one hundred horse would have beaten all the forces of the strongest provinces. . . . Then the Irish had darts, and now they are furnished with as good pikes and muskets as England hath."¹² The last half of this assertion was hardly warranted by facts. At the height of his success the arms furnished by the Earl of Tyrone to the Munster forces included 422 calivers only, and without them the Southern Irish had practically no firearms.

Another want which seriously reduced the fighting value of the native forces was the absence of regular or uniform organization and equipment. Each chief and captain armed his following as best he could consistently with circumstances. Consequently there was neither efficiency nor uniformity. The poverty of equipment of the native levies may be inferred from the Privy Council being compelled in 1560, by the same defect in the presumably better equipped Irish of the Pale, to order a general muster of all liable to service, with a view to discover and make good the deficiencies in their furniture.

Without even the rude cannon of the period the

¹² *Discourse touching a War with Spain.*

ability of the Irish to reduce fortified places was necessarily small. Unable to effect any damage at a distance, they relied principally upon an engine called a sow ; a wooden structure mounted on wheels, with a very sloping roof covered with several thickness of skins, and moved into position by means of levers. Hidden beneath this cumbrous machine, they approached the wall and attempted to undermine or batter it. To render this practice useless most towns and castles had their walls defended by splayed bottomed towers, from whence, protected by wetted skins against the arrows of the besiegers' covering parties, the defenders fired along the walls.

Wetted skins played an important part in the warfare of the period. In addition to using them for all sorts of covering purposes, the Irish were great adepts at making light boats by covering osier twigs with skins of horses or cattle. They were thus enabled to cross rivers and streams that from floods or season were otherwise impassable. The only tents they seem to have had were leathern ones, used for fording purposes also on an emergency.

The use of bagpipes and bronze trumpets was common to all the Irish troops ; the former being considered so distinctively national that in many places they were forbidden, and kettledrums used instead.

When required, at any season of the year, the Irish were able to continue in the field very lightly accoutred ; dispensing with their cloaks, long trews, and shoes. Their mobility was further increased by the little

baggage and supplies they usually carried being left to the care of servants, and followers without arms, or the local peasantry. On these occasions they were independent of supplies. Water was always obtainable, and each man carried the beef or black puddings required for his own consumption. That, even on ordinary occasions, they marched faster than the Royalists was partly due to their lighter equipment. O'Donnell, in his march from the North to Kinsale was said to have covered thirty-two Irish miles (about forty English) on one winter's day. Under the adverse conditions, a fine performance negating the accompaniment of much transport.

ENGLISH SOLDIERS.—At the beginning of the Elizabethan wars the English troops or, "soldiers of London,"—as they were termed by the Irish writers—were not mere feudal levies, but engaged men who had served, or were intended to serve, some time in the country.

They appear to have been comparatively well treated. Their equipment was extremely good, and their personal clothing and rations would even now be considered sufficient and ample. When quartered in the towns, 2s. per week was paid for each soldier, horse or foot, 7d. each for the horse boys, and a similar sum for each horse. For this the men were provided with accommodation, and on flesh days bread, drink, and meat. On fish days, fish or white meat, *i.e.*, fowl, was substituted for the ordinary meat. The horses were given their oats in the ear, no attempt being made to thresh them. From the regulations, it appears each

horse soldier had two horses, and a horse boy to look after them. Special regulations were framed to guard the soldier, English or Irish, and his horses, against fraud on the part of their hosts.

Notwithstanding the care taken of the men and the superiority of their armament, there are frequent indications that except when protected by their cavalry, natural obstacles, or longer range of their fire arms, they did not always stand their ground; the test of the infantry soldier's stoutness, the push of pike, being seldom resorted to. Knowing this, Lord Mountjoy insisted upon his men always wearing their helmets, to reduce if possible the loss resulting from the Irish—encouraged by the advantage of arms coming to close quarters; "where commonly he prevaieth." Raleigh complained that they were such poor and miserable creatures that their captains dare not lead them to serve. During the first Earl of Essex's attempt upon the North, Welsford wrote to Burleigh—"I find such imperfections in our countrymen that, through long peace had in England, they have lost the minds of soldiers, and are become weak in body to endure the travail, and miserable in mind to sustain the force of the enemy." The second Earl, when smarting under the harassing he received in the West and Midlands, or in extenuation of his want of success, alleged that the men of Devon were cowardly in the field.

Subsequently to Welsford's complaint there was an improvement. Commanders and men were veterans who had seen service in the Low Countries, then considered seminaries and nurseries for training the

Queen's officers and men. Sir John Norris' army (1594) was principally composed of these veterans, and their commander owed to the reputation he had brought back from the Continent, the command of the troops in Ireland. Like many others he lost both life and fame in the country that has proved the grave of so many reputations. Under the stress of maintaining Lord Mountjoy's army before Kinsale at some strength the reinforcements again fell off in quality, the six thousand men sent from England being described as wretched material to begin with, pressed men, beggars, and gaol birds, who either fell sick and died, or ran away.

Very few English officers of reputation escaped service in Ireland, most of those who had distinguished themselves abroad bringing the experience and knowledge they had acquired to bear on the Irish. That, in more than one instance, service abroad together led to friction and want of zeal in co-operation in Ireland, does not lessen the compliment paid the Irish in considering the best military talent at the Queen's disposal not derogatorily employed in reducing them.

After making every allowance for the poor quality of their opponents, it is surprising that the Irish, considering their inferiority in armament and leading and the discordant elements always present in their ranks, were able or ventured to engage any English force. That they did, and in very many cases successfully, was due to some extent to the different conditions of country and climate, but more to the better material in their ranks.

LOCALITY AND DEFEATS.—The importance of ground as a contributory factor in various lost or doubtful engagements was not unnoticed, though its effect was generally exaggerated rather than admit any credit to the opponents. Few of the English commanders being so plain spoken as Essex in his report on the defeat near Wicklow ; “and our troops, having advantage of numbers, and no disadvantage of ground, were put in rout and many cut to pieces without striking a blow.”¹³

The term “Pass” frequently occurring in military narratives of the period was used to denote not only a path through or over hills, but a cut road or path through woods. When their opponents were likely to traverse one of the latter, the Irish endeavoured secretly to prepare a natural entanglement of trees and bushes a short distance from, and parallel to, the track on both sides, so that, once committed to the pass, the enemy when attacked were unable to move to either flank without considerable delay and exposure, the Irish meanwhile doing great execution with their arrows and darts. Thick woods of hazel and sallies (alders) the Irish were very partial to, and always endeavoured to utilize. The national preference for fords, and objection to bridges, on the other hand, was more than once the cause of disaster, through the Royalists lying in ambush at them.

Through their superior mobility the Irish usually had the choice of ground upon which to engage, and thus compelled their opponents to attack them on unfavour-

¹³ To Privy Council. July, '59.

able ground, or made their own attack at places where the superior musketry and gun-fire of their foes was of no avail. The defeat on the banks of the Farna river, known as the battle of the Ford of Biscuits, from the quantities of that comestible thrown away in their flight by the Royalists; that of the Pass of Plumes, so called from the number of plumes collected by the Irish after the engagement; and that at Tyrrell's Pass, are cases in point. Lord Grey's disastrous defeat at the wood of Glenmalure is an example of a commander despising the Irish and their system of warfare, and paying for his foolishness. The gallant Clifford's defeat on the Curlew mountains merits this reproach also.

The question of transport, which affected so materially the mobility of the English forces, was an ever-present and troublesome one all through the wars. The physical difficulties of the country, with the comparative scarcity of roads and bridges, rendered the use of wheeled transport almost impossible. They, therefore, fell back upon pack animals, general orders for musters always directing the substitution of garrans, or baggage animals, for the quota of carts due from the various baronies. In these orders the occasional references to *cariages* appear to be intended for the cumbrous cannon of the period. From the Irish always transporting their wounded officers, or sick and wounded men, on horse-back or in horse litters, it is evident they also were without wheeled vehicles.

DESCRIPTIONS OF OPERATIONS.—The majority

of the writers to whom we are indebted for narratives of the Irish wars had neither local nor professional knowledge of the subject, and relied exclusively upon official despatches. Much confusion has, therefore, resulted from the, to English ears, uncouth names of places, and bewildering similarity in names of individuals. Amongst other instances, Harrington's defeat in Leix is frequently confounded with the reverse on the Wicklow hills ; and the severe punishment inflicted, the subordinate leaders being executed and the rank and file decimated, is alleged to have followed both events.

In some narratives, operations involving great loss of men and prestige, and materially affecting the course of events, are either wholly omitted or merely glanced at. The Irish account of James Fitzmaurice's campaign (1574), for instance, contains a long list of successful engagements, of which no mention, or a mere deprecatory one, appears in the accounts of their opponents. Sir J. Desmond's victories at the Blackwood forest, Monastir Nenay, Gort na pisi, and the affair at Kilmallock, are likewise denied the prominence due to their importance by English writers.

Some inaccuracies are so obvious that they serve no purpose except to draw attention to the partisan spirit in which they were conceived. One writer, describing Randolph's sally with four hundred men from Derry, asks us to believe that four hundred Irish were killed, with the loss of the commander only. In point of fact, the town and fort, with some hundreds

of the garrison, including Randolph, were destroyed by an explosion. Another, narrating the capture of Dursey Island by the English, doubles the numbers of the defenders, and then conveys the impression their defence was a poor affair. Another account has that the garrison were but one-fourth the numbers of the besiegers, and that the island was not captured until the only ordnance possessed by the besieged had been lost. Describing the English defeat on the Curlew mountains, an Irish writer estimates the native forces at two hundred men only. They were in reality but slightly inferior in number to their foes.

The unreliability of official reports is notorious. Compare, for instance, the account furnished to the Council in England by Sir George Carew and the Earl of Thomond, of the capture of the Earl of Ormond during a parley with O'Morra with the Irish account. Careful examination of the plan and details supports the latter, except that the Irish casualties are understated.

Official writers and historians were not the only offenders against accuracy. Lord Burleigh, writing to Lord Sussex of a defeat inflicted by Shane O'Neill, makes no secret of his perversion of fact:—"I had scattered the matter abroad to be a plain overthrow of Shayne's power, with the hurt of two or three captains. The next day my Lord of Kildare had letters from my lady his wife, but my former occupying of men's minds retarded the credit of the reports of those letters." In the action thus referred to several officers and four hundred men, all lately arrived from

England, were defeated. From the battle being termed by the Irish that of the red sagums, or uniforms, we may consider it one of the earliest allusions to the historic red coats of the British army.

As a rule, to obtain an approximately correct impression of the achievements of either side in the Irish wars it is necessary to compare the different accounts, selecting and giving preference to descriptions by eye-witnesses and those written at the time, and then submit the conclusions arrived at to the analysis of probabilities and results.

SOME IRISH LEADERS.—The greatest military commander, if not the greatest Irishman, on the native side during the Elizabethan period was Hugh O'Neill, Earl of Tyrone. The son of Mathew, Baron of Dungannon, his resemblance, physically and mentally, to his uncle the unfortunate Shane O'Neill, sets at rest the doubt as to his father's parentage. Shane found it convenient to originate. He was reputed brave, and was known to be active and energetic. Events proved him a clever and humane leader, and an honourable and sagacious statesman, versed in all the complexities of European politics. Affable in his dealings with inferiors, he was equally at home in the best English society, and at the head of an Irish army.

Tyrone had studied the art of war under English auspices, had commanded some cavalry at the operations round Smerwick, and, later, was wounded in a Royalist engagement with Maguire on the banks of the Earne. His early predilections having been

alienated by official mismanagement, he became the leader of the Irish Confederates, and successfully employed against his erstwhile tutors the knowledge and experience acquired under their banners. Of his versatility in professional matters, and readiness to discern and utilise the capabilities of his army, there are numerous instances. His system of training his clansmen and followers in successive contingents, until they had all received some military schooling, stamped him as far in advance of contemporary Irish nobles. His dispositions to resist the English landing at Lough Foyle, and the means employed to capture Armagh in the campaign of 1597, with the severe defeat inflicted on the Royalists at Droum-flinch would alone have proved him a good commander; and what was less common at the time, a merciful one, But Tyrone's prominence as a leader rests upon a much greater achievement than these—the victory at the (northern) Blackwater, or as known to the Irish, “Beal an atha buidh,” the mouth of the Yellow Ford.

BATTLE OF BLACKWATER.—The Royalists, about five thousand strong, were moving to the north, under the command of Marshal Bagnall, a skilful leader greatly esteemed by the Irish, and, much against his will, brother-in-law to his opponent Tyrone. Quite half of the Royalist forces were English, the remainder natives. All the former were veterans from the Low Countries or had seen service before in Ireland, and their allies had done good service previously. All were well equipped, wore armour, had brass cannons on wheels, and were confident of success.

The Irish were also about five thousand strong (English accounts say eight thousand) and, through Tyrone's exertions, equipped rather better than usual. A prophecy by St. Columkille that they would beat the English in battle at this particular place having been communicated to them, they also anticipated a victory.

The Irish position was at the far end of an open plain, thickly studded with trees and approached by a difficult track, bounded with low, thin bushes. At the end, where the track gave access to more open ground, Tyrone had caused numerous pits and small trenches to be dug and overlaid with brambles and sods of turf. Beyond these again, the plain extended for some distance until narrowed by bogs on both sides into a space of about 400 yards wide, rendered soft by overflowing water from the bogs. Beyond this saturated ground Tyrone's men had dug a ditch and dike, and, with the excavated earth, formed a bank four feet high right across the firm ground. A short distance behind it, on open firm ground, the main body of the Irish were drawn up.

On a hot Sunday morning in August, the Royalists, having been addressed by Bagnall, who concluded his remarks with a not unusual offer—that of one thousand pounds in gold for the heads of either of his opponents, O'Neill or O'Donnell,¹⁴ marched out of Armagh in three divisions of foot and one of cavalry. With banners displayed, trumpets sounding and drums beating, they directed their march towards

¹⁴ O'Sullivan Beare.

the Irish, watching them in the distance. Directly the leading division entered the track it was assailed with flights of arrows from the kernes, and the shot of some gun-men posted behind the trees. Dispersing these, the vanguard cavalry fought their way to the end of the track and emerged on to the plain, when they immediately fell into disorder among the pits and trenches. Extricated with loss, by their heavily-armed musketeers, they were repeatedly attacked by the Irish horse under Maguire and O'Hanlon. Despite this favourable opening, the Irish skirmishers though they made several charges on the men-at-arms, were driven back. Slowly advancing, exultant cries of victory already rising from their ranks, the Royalists were again thrown into confusion at the saturated ground, but after a fierce struggle managed to gain the proximity of the earthen bank. Here, again, the fighting, which lasted for some time fiercely and hotly, resulted in favour of the Royal troops, who, having brought up their cannon, pounded the Irish through gaps in the bank. Levelling this in some places, surmounting it in others, the Royalists gained the firm ground beyond. Without reforming their ranks they then resumed the advance, one division directed against Tyrone, the other against O'Donnell; a movement which masked the fire of the cannon. At this critical moment, when the Irish, emboldened by the guns having ceased firing and the confusion in their enemy's ranks, were about to attack, an English musketeer, taking out some powder to charge his piece, thrust a lighted match in his hand into the

powder barrel. The explosion ignited two other barrels, the whole causing considerable loss and increased confusion. Almost simultaneously a cannon burst, killing everyone near it. Before the leading division, which had already borne the brunt of nearly all the fighting and the loss from the explosion, could regain a semblance of order, it was shattered by a well-directed volley from Tyrone's musketeers. The cavalry and galloglasses completed its discomfiture, and as a potential force the division ceased to exist. The next division, seeing their comrades in flight, on being fiercely assailed by O'Donnell, also broke up. Montague's cavalry, making no effort to prevent the Irish cavalry falling on their scattered footmen, the defeat became a rout for these divisions.

Bagnall, at the head of the third division, remained in observation of the others. At the moment of their discomfiture, either oppressed by the heat or to give an order, he raised the visor of his helmet. A ball penetrated his brain and he fell dead from the saddle. Alarmed by the fall of their leader, and unable to stem the frantic rush of the fugitives, this division broke and fled. The battle was over; the heroic efforts of the O'Reilly clan cavalry doing but little more than mitigate the slaughter, which continued up to the walls of Dundalk. In these efforts O'Reilly, with several young gentlemen of his name, was slain.¹⁵

The Royalist loss amounted to twenty-three officers, including the Marshal, seventeen hundred men, and

¹⁵ O'Sullivan.

all the artillery, arms, ammunition, and provisions. That the loss was not greater was attributed to the Irish ammunition being exhausted, and the exertions of O'Reilly's cavalry. The victors admitted a loss of two hundred killed and wounded. Other accounts put their loss at four times this number.

This, the most complete victory gained by the Irish Confederates over a Royalist force, was, as usual, attributed to the advantageous position occupied by the victors. The faulty dispositions which split up the Royalists into detachments, and then allowed the detachments to be overwhelmed in sight of one another, sufficiently explains the disaster. To the Irish Confederates the glory of their victory was sadly tarnished through some three hundred of the Royalist Irish foot deserting to them before the day was irretrievably lost.

On the receipt of the news in Dublin the Lords Justices armed every available man, and bricked up the city gates. In England, and on the Continent, such an impression did the news make that it was said the English in Ireland dreaded Tyrone as the Romans, after their defeat at Cannæ, feared Hannibal. The battle furnished the Irish with a congenial theme for numerous ballads, chants, and annals, the bravery displayed by the vanquished receiving due acknowledgment in them all.

Never was there a more striking illustration of the one-sided manner in which history is usually written than this affair at the Blackwater ford. Despite the sensation which it caused at the time,

neither the battle itself nor the effusions to which it gave birth are now known to even a tithe of the representatives of the nationalities engaged. Whilst page after page has been devoted to descriptions of combats possessing neither meaning nor interest, beyond the fact that they support or illustrate the writers' contentions, we are content to let this splendid achievement sink into oblivion, because partisan writers have been unable to distort or explain away the facts connected with it.

Not the least of its claims to distinction is that this battle marked the beginning of a new era in Irish warfare. Both sides discerned that the glamour surrounding the man clad in a panoply of steel was dispelled. His invulnerability; the impetuosity of the horseman; strength of the galloglass; activity of the kerne; all were dominated by the deadly shot. Future efforts were therefore devoted to obtaining and utilising fire arms. All armour, except head pieces, practically disappeared from footmen, and partially from horsemen.

To return to the Irish leaders. Among the most prominent were Captain Tyrrel, Hugh Roe O'Donnell, O'Rourke, Prince of Breffny, Owen O'More, and Maguire, Prince of Fermanagh.

Tyrrel, who, by the way, was an Anglo-Irishman, figured largely throughout the wars, and was reputed a veteran soldier—"unlike most of the Irish commanders."¹⁶ He was successful in a number of minor engagements, the most important, the defeat of a

¹⁶ MacGeoghegan.

superior force under Lord Trimbleston's son, and the cutting up of the Royalists at a place now known as Tyrrel's Pass in Westmeath.

Red Hugh O'Donnell's greatest exploit, in conjunction with O'Rourke, was the defeat on the Curlew Mountains of Sir C. Clifford, President of Connaught, and a force outnumbering the Confederates. Actuated by the hope of surprising the enemy, whose position had been communicated by two deserters, Clifford launched his weary, wet, and hungry force against the Irish entrenchments. Here also the cavalry appear to have held aloof while their foot, unable to withstand the onslaught of the Confederate galloglasses, were put to the rout. Attempting to stem the retreat Clifford was struck down, and, though gallantly rescued by two of his galloglasses, was shortly afterwards overtaken and slain.

This expedition is noticeable for an Irish naval force under Theobald Burke (usually known as Tibbott na long, *i.e.*, Theobald of the ships) moving along the coast to co-operate with Clifford. On his death the expedition was abandoned.

O'More successfully engaged the Royalists on several occasions, his principal performance being the destruction of Essex's rear-guard at the Pass of Plumes. On this occasion he was supported by Donal MacCarthy. In an expedition to Offally, O'More was out-generalled by the more scientific English leaders, and was killed while attempting to prevent the relief of Maryborough.

The circumstances connected with Maguire's death

well illustrate the reckless bravery of the leaders, and the personal and national rivalry which too frequently caused them to forget their positions and become mere men at arms. Sir Warham St. Leger was considered by his countrymen the bravest officer and best horseman in Ireland: Maguire, Prince of Fermanagh, had the same reputation with his countrymen. Therefore, when Maguire, with three attendants only, was waylaid some distance from his camp by St. Leger and a strong party of horse, an encounter was assured. Disdaining to escape, Maguire charged through the English ranks to engage his rival, and while poising his spear to transfix St. Leger, was shot through the body, but the spear found its mark in St. Leger's neck, and the rivals fell dead together. Maguire's death was a serious blow to the Confederates. By all parties he was esteemed a bold and daring commander, displaying in himself and nurturing in his men several national military excellencies. Against his defeat at the Ford of Belacooloon by Sir H. Bagnall, he could place his victory over Sir Henry Duke at the Ford of Biscuits, and the defeat and death of Commander Gilbert. The defeat at Belacooloon is principally noticeable through the Earl of Tyrone having been in command of the Royalist cavalry; the quarrel between him and Marshal Bagnall concerning the latter's behaviour on the occasion being given as the cause of Tyrone's defection from the English interest.

Difficult as it is to dissociate the military commanders of the period from the prevailing Machiavelian

methods of domestic and political administration, in contemplating their warfare we discern less sophisticated surroundings ; some of them reminiscent of a state of society when strength of arm rather than subtlety of intellect guarded the owner's sense of honour.

When President of Munster, Sir John Perrott, with a view to conclude the long "brabbling" with James of Desmond, challenged him to mortal combat. The two principals, and a party of horse and foot on each side, were to fight in the presence of troops of both nationalities, a truce to be maintained during the day by the spectators. From the point of view of history and literature in general, the prevention by Perrott's official superiors of the Homeric contest which we can imagine would have resulted, is to be regretted.

PERSONAL LEADING.—Throughout the Elizabethan wars the value of personal leading as a factor in the ultimate result to the English troops is very noticeable. A constant sequence of events being the death of the leader : then the defeat of his men. Thomas Norris, President of Munster, when engaged with Burke of Castle Connell, was mortally wounded, and his force dispersed. Dudley Bagnall and Sir J. Chichester, killed and defeated at Leighlin and Alfraca, and Lords Burgh and Kildare, both mortally wounded at Droum-flinch, are other instances in point. From the frequency of these mishaps it would appear either the troops required examples of willingness to engage the enemy, or the leaders were sacrificed in vain attempts to avert disaster. This

was not the case with their opponents. Relatively, few Irish leaders were slain, except in foolhardy enterprises like that of Maguire. There remains a possibility that this unusual loss of leaders was the consequence of adhering to the English custom of commanders and knights fighting on foot in a set field.

Noticeable, also, was the disproportionate result occasionally achieved by ridiculously small numbers on both sides, and the absence of any permanent advantage or loss to either victor or vanquished.

Among the confederacies which seriously shook Elizabeth's hold upon Ireland was that known by the name of Lord Baltinglass. Yet Lord Deputy Grey had but nine hundred horse and foot when he set out to curb the Confederates. Fitzmaurice, Baron of Lixnaw, devastated the districts of Ormond, Tipperary, and Waterford, with a force so small that Captain Zouch, having received an addition of two hundred to his command of four hundred and fifty, was strong enough to harass and defeat him on several occasions. Shortly afterwards Zouch also experienced the vicissitudes of fortune at the hands of Donal O'Sullivan. At the height of a very troublesome period the garrisons of Munster were said to amount to but four hundred and fifty horse and foot. The most typical instance of all was when Lord Deputy Sidney, with six hundred men only, pacified the attainable parts of the North, South, and Midlands; and had barely returned to Dublin when O'Morra recovered his own country, situated near the Pale, and burnt five English towns.

The explanation of part of this will be found in the disposition of the military forces of the Crown. In the parts subject to these variations of fortune the permanent garrisons were few and small in number, their functions being simply to hold the important tactical points; the safety of the intervening country being committed to "the Queen's" chiefs or nobles, who were always available and ready to oppose the disaffected natives or any other malcontent party. When these local measures proved insufficient, the Lord President or other officials, or, as a last resource, the Lord Deputy, with a small army appeared on the scene. Hence the custom of summoning a general hosting or muster about midsummer annually, so as to ensure having a force sufficient for emergencies at the season when the Irish were usually best fitted to commence hostilities.

From the rise of Shane O'Neill to the subjugation of his nephew, the great Earl of Tyrone, the Queen's lieutenants were continually engaged in expeditions to some parts of the kingdom. Varying success attended these excursions. Victorious in the south, disaster dogged them in the north. Defeated on the borders of the Pale, they reduced remote districts to complete subjection. Resistance suppressed in one district started up in another stronger than ever. The one thing constant was the continual loss of men and the expense. The suppression of Shane O'Neill alone was said to have cost the lives of three thousand English soldiers, besides the Irish and Scots levies.

NUMBERS.—The frequency and size of the various punitive expeditions during the last quarter of the 16th century forms a fairly correct index to the general trend of military events. Lord Grey and Sir H. Sidney were temporarily successful in the north, south, and west, with comparatively small forces. Norris and Bagnall, a few years afterwards, took the field with armies of five thousand men each. Their want of success led to the Earl of Essex's operations with an army quadruple their numbers.

To appreciate the task set the Royalist generals, and the relative merits of the combatants, some knowledge of their respective numbers is necessary. Moryson calculated that in the year 1599 there were nearly twenty thousand insurgents (horse and foot) under arms, a number greater than had been drawn together previously. About the same time, equally reliable authorities estimated the numbers of Essex's army (officially returned at sixteen thousand foot and thirteen hundred horse, all English) and the various garrisons scattered throughout the country at the same figure. The Irish, allied and mercenaries, though they constituted a considerable force, are not included in this total.

The Crown officials always manifested a tendency to exaggerate the numbers of the "rebels" and to complain of Ministers in England under-estimating them. They further complained that the soldiers at their disposal were always said to be more in numbers than actually was the case. Apparently, official documents ought to decide this question, but they do

not, their figures being totally unreliable, the "poll" numbers in the English ranks never agreeing with them. The discrepancies, as a rule, were due to the custom of "dead" pays, *i.e.*, retaining men on the muster-rolls when they had ceased to be effective by reason of death or wounds, and the practice of assigning allowances to officers in the form of pay for fictitious soldiers.

Though some difficulty likewise attends ascertaining the proportions of the two nationalities under English commanders on any particular occasion, we may safely infer that, with the exception of reinforcements marching from the coast, English forces were always accompanied by some Irish, either mercenaries or levies. In the great hosting or assembling against Shane O'Neill the contingents furnished by the Irish (excluding the regulars in the Queen's pay), equalled in numbers the Anglo-Irish quotas, O'Donnell's proportion being sixty horsemen, one hundred and twenty galloglasses, and three hundred Scots, that is kernes. Sir Conyers Clifford's detachment at the fight on the Curlew mountains was composed mainly of Connaught and Meath Irish, with English and Irish regulars, the latter officered by younger sons of English families. Bingham, during his operations in Connaught, made considerable use of Irish mercenaries; while John Bingham claimed to have done great execution in Mayo with some companies of foot and six hundred kernes. Forces raised by instructions from Dublin were still more heterogeneous. Lord Ormond's army, in his raid on the south and west, contained

Anglo-Irish, Irish of the Pale, and English regulars. At Kinsale the Royalist army, notwithstanding three reinforcements of two thousand men each had been sent from England, consisted principally of the provincial forces and levies of Irish from the three southern counties. Conspicuous among the provincial forces in all Royalist armies were the contingents from the cities and towns. Generally men born in the country and accustomed to the climate, language, and warfare, these contingents on more than one occasion proved themselves the best troops at the disposal of the authorities. In material and equipment also they were reputed better than the ordinary regulars.

The most complete and largest army in organization, equipment, and numbers that until the penultimate year of the century had ever served in Ireland was the one confided to the Earl of Essex. Two thousand of the men were trained veterans recalled from the Dutch service—though it was said they had sent back neither complete regiments nor the best men—the remainder were acclimatised and seasoned troops for some time in the country, and drafts from the County Train Bands, varying in numbers from four hundred furnished by Yorkshire to thirty-four from Essex.

ESSEX'S ARMY.—Authorities differed in their opinions of the quality of this army. Some considered the county quotas indifferent men, badly provided and furnished. Others that the men were good enough but badly clothed. A distinguishing feature of it, one not tending to lessen its efficiency, was the number

of former officers serving as volunteers in the ranks, or in subordinate capacities. So numerous were they, that it was suggested to form a regiment of them.

After the defects of arms and clothing were rectified the cavalry wore buff jackets, horsemen's long cloaks of strong orange-coloured cloth, stout breeches, and long boots; they had breast and head-pieces, and carried swords and long pistols. The infantry were in blue cloth coats well lined, their defensive armour varied with their weapons, but all wore head-pieces. Companies of one hundred men were composed, half of pikes and halberds, half of carbines and muskets; the former to form an impenetrable front rank and the shot the rear rank.

As the campaign progressed, this army, contrary to what usually happens, deteriorated, a defect attributed to the numbers prostrated by sickness, the bad material of the reinforcements, and to the gallants returning home, disgusted, it is presumed, with the climate and the harassing nature of the warfare rather than with the distribution of honours, for Essex was lavishly extravagant in that respect.

Essex's army, as far as any force of the period could be, was a mobile field force, superior in numbers to any enemy that could be brought against it, except in the north, and there Tyrone could rely upon his own and O'Donnell's contingents only for service beyond their own districts. The other leaders could seldom rely upon one another, and neither singly nor in combination could command a force equal to Essex's. Nevertheless, the fact of this army marching

from one side of the Island to the other, must not be accepted as a proof of success. No English army in Ireland did worse than it. Its rearguard was cut up at the Pass of Plumes, after leaving Askeaton it met with a reverse at Balie-en-finitere, and on the march through Munster was pursued and harassed up to the gates of Waterford. The official version of the campaign does not agree with private letters or the facts of the truce; several Irish successes are not mentioned, others were given to the public as defeats. The unusual reticence of English writers upon the march through Munster is, in itself, suspicious. The only details admitted were, that the Royalists were wearied and distressed, and their companies incredibly wasted when they reached Dublin.

Before concluding with Essex's army one detail connected with its formation raises a doubt whether the generally accepted belief in the martial spirit of the Elizabethan English does not need revision. In nearly all the county train bands or militia, a strong disinclination to go to Ireland was manifested, sums of from twenty to forty pounds (a fortune in those days) being paid for substitutes.¹⁷ Most of the counties protested they were too heavily assessed on their quotas; and Hereford petitioned to be exempted from further levies during the continuance of the Irish wars.

Despite this aversion, indicating in itself failure in the object sought for, or unusual difficulty in its attainment, and the heterogeneous character and poor material frequently apparent in the Royalist forces,

¹⁷ Hatfield MSS.

victory was not always absent from their banners. Even during the dark period of the last few years of the century English commanders achieved several successes, and the nobles and chiefs, still adhering to the Queen's party, did good service in all directions. In addition to the successes already mentioned, Bingham defeated several parties of the Irish, and was also successful in operations in the vicinity of Enniskillen fort. Tyrone was surprised and lost his camp at Mullaghbane, and the O'Driscolls defeated a naval force of Munster rebels. Some of the minor Royalists successes stand out quite as distinctly as those of their opponents, notably the defence of the Blackwater fort (the key of Ulster) by Captain Williams, the incredibly stout defence of Molahiff Castle by Nicholas Browne, and the defeat by Captain Graeme of a force exceeding his own ten-fold.

TRUCES.—When estimating the credibility of either side, or to obtain an approximately correct idea of the actual course of events, the constant attempts to conclude truces and treaties by successive Lord Deputies or their agents with the Irish leaders, should not be overlooked. The occasional refusal by the latter to negotiate—usually considered an indication of ability to command success—was influenced by the arrival or promise of Spanish assistance. But in general the negotiations conformed to the rule that it is not the custom of the victor to treat except upon his own terms, nor the vanquished to reject terms if incapable of further resistance.

After, to the confederated Irish, the auspicious

opening of hostilities in 1595, the English authorities, to gain time, professed a desire to negotiate. Tyrone consented to give audience to the Commissioners at the head of his army, but, remembering the fate of a Desmond in the same locality, would not enter a walled town. Eventually, a meeting took place, and Tyrone demanded complete cessation of attempts to disturb the Catholic Church, neither garrisons nor sheriffs to be placed in the Irish territories, which were to be under the control of their lawfully elected native chiefs, and an indemnity to him and his allies in all the provinces. The Commissioners having gained their object, suggested that the Confederates should lay down their arms, sue for pardon, and disclose their dealings with foreigners. On this negotiations were broken off, but the truce was renewed till the following April.

Next year, General Norris and Sir Geoffrey Fenton were commanded to re-open negotiations with the Irish leader, but their efforts proved barren. Later Norris tried for a whole month to induce O'Donnell to come to some arrangement, and, after Russell's defeat, the new Deputy, Lord Burgh, made overtures to Tyrone, O'Donnell, and others. Subsequently the Earl of Ormond was commissioned to approach Tyrone, and terms similar to those mentioned before, with the exception of liberty of conscience, were acceded to by the English Council. Naturally this omission terminated the arrangement. In September, 1599, when the two armies were facing each other, Tyrone, it is said, solicited an interview with Essex.

The meeting took place in the mid-stream of the River Lagan. After some conversation between the leaders, a few notabilities on either side were called in, and Tyrone stated the terms upon which the Irish would lay down their arms, viz. :—Complete liberty of conscience ; indemnity to all the Confederates ; the judges, officials, and half the army in the country, to be Irish. Pending the ratification of these terms by the Queen's advisers in London, a truce for six weeks was concluded.¹⁸ Before its expiration Essex had left Ireland.

Though Tyrone solicited this interview, there is not the least doubt it was to Essex's advantage to obtain a suspension of hostilities. The pivot of a plan upon which the pacification of Ulster depended was the establishment of a garrison on Lough Foyle ; Essex was unable to spare the necessary men for this garrison, a confession of weakness admitted by the Irish to the English Privy Council, and concurred in by the colonels of the army,¹⁹ for reasons no victorious force, or one able to hold its own, would have considered for a moment.

One of Tyrone's personal friends in the English camp was Sir W. Warren, Warren having assisted to abduct Tyrone's wife from the relatives in whose care she had been placed by her brother, Marshal Bagnall, and Tyrone's marriage having taken place in Warren's house. To this friend of the enemy, fresh peace negotiations were entrusted. On their completion, Warren, in due course, reported to the acting

¹⁸ Lombard and others.

¹⁹ Hatfield MSS.

Governors, the Chancellor, and Sir George Carew. They, fearing that Tyrone, who proposed to come to the border of the Pale with greater forces than ever,²⁰ would resume hostilities at the expiration of the truce, then imminent, so intimidated Warren that he undertook to immediately return to Tyrone, and dissuade him from that course.

Within a month, as we gather from a letter to the Queen, Tyrone had refused any further peace,²¹ and had also refused, as he had previously in the interview with Essex, to extend the cessation of operations until the following May. In December of the same year Lord Ormond was the Acting Deputy, and a truce for a month was agreed to. A few days later, Warren delivered from Tyrone an ambiguous answer to the effect that he would on conditions make peace without O'Donnell, but would not give pledges for loyalty. Before resuming active operations the following April, Tyrone refused terms offered by the new Deputy, Lord Mountjoy.²²

Even if we admit that the desire for some arrangement, shown in the prolonged peace negotiations, did not arise from the weakness of the English position, there are unmistakable indications—in their belief in Tyrone's ability to cut off all the English Garrisons, overrun the Pale, and encamp outside Dublin;²³ in the contemplated abandonment to the rebels of the country north of Dundalk;²⁴ in the admission of inferiority contained in the forbearance from any

²⁰ Carew's Letter to Essex, October 5. ²¹ Hatfield MSS.

²² Hatfield MSS. ²³ Captain Lee. ²⁴ Conference at Faughart, 1596.

attempt to dispute Tyrone's almost regal progress from north to south of the Island in the year 1600; and in the despatch of Essex's grand army—that the Royalist arms were not so uniformly successful as is frequently asserted and commonly believed. That, on the contrary, the Irish had attained an almost general and complete success.

MOUNTJOY'S CAMPAIGN.—Until Lord Mountjoy—the greatest military commander at the Queen's disposal—as the Queen's Lieutenant, and Sir George Carew the Lord president of Munster, assumed the direction of operations, the flood of Irish success did not abate. Then, emboldened by the arrival of immense supplies and strong reinforcements under experienced officers, and goaded by the sarcastic comments of the Queen, the Royalists vigorously entered upon fresh military operations and negotiations.

Openly and insidiously assailed, the weakness and exhaustion of the Irish did not permit a continuance of their aggressive tactics. They fell back on the defensive, and the tide of victory turned. During the summer the loss of Owen O'More, killed in a skirmish with Mountjoy's troops, caused practically the whole of Leinster and the Midlands to submit. In the northern districts comparatively little was gained by the Royalists. Dowcra, certainly, had landed at Derry and posted a few garrisons, but as a set off against this Sir J. Chamberlain had been killed and his command defeated by O'Dogherty. Tyrone was holding the rest of Ulster, the only sign that he was feeling pressure being that he had recalled the

bonnaghts lent to the southern chiefs. O'Rourke was also holding his own. Farther south the strong castle of Carrigfoyle had been re-captured.

Whether the very efficient secret service established by Secretary Walsingham had obtained accurate information of the Spanish plans, or their prescience was solely the result of a skilful forecast, in Munster the Queen's officers were leaving no stone unturned in their efforts to remove all opposition. Weakened by continuous defections and the withdrawal of Tyrone's bonnaghts, the Desmonds, Burkes, MacCarthys and others, though still in arms, were unable effectively to cope with the Royalists. Consequently when, in the autumn, the long-expected Spanish force landed at Kinsale on the south coast, in place of finding an Irish army ready to co-operate with them they were informed the nearest assistance of any value was in the northern province.

KINSALE.—The last occasion upon which the forces of the Catholic King and the Protestant Queen had encountered on land, was in furtherance of schemes as dissimilar as the little town of Kinsale, clinging to the hill side at the top of a small harbour, was to the size and splendour of Cadiz. With the English in Cadiz it was simply a question of inflicting as much damage as possible and then retiring. By the Spaniards in Kinsale it was hoped, in combination with the natives, to eject once and for all the heretical intruders. Though the resolution to disembark in the land-locked harbour of Kinsale was a mistake, affairs seemed to progress in favour of the Spaniards. They

were received with respect, if not enthusiasm, by the local authorities; the small English garrison, accompanied by all the better-class inhabitants, promptly retiring to Cork. The two insignificant castles on the small peninsulas protecting the inner harbour were soon captured. The town walls were capable of defence, and though guns and ammunition were wanting, two cannon had been found in the town, and food was abundant.

Disappointed at not being met by the promised Irish army, the Spanish commander immediately began directly, and through his countryman the Catholic Archbishop of Dublin, to forward urgent requests to the northern leaders for an immediate junction. To pacify the Spaniards, O'Sullivan Beare, the most important local Confederate chief, offered a sufficient number of men to ensure them against surprise until the arrival of the northern Irish. But owing to these men being unarmed, and that part of the Spanish fleet which had on board the equipment for the Irish expected to join having been separated from him, the Spanish Commander was unable to entertain the offer.

In the meantime the Royalists were not idle. Mountjoy had united his forces at Athlone and immediately set them in motion for the south. Carew also had been energetically providing stores of food and forage, and arresting or taking hostages from the Irish likely to become actively disloyal.

These precautions proved satisfactory, and enabled the Royalists to march unmolested to within five

miles of the east of Kinsale, from whence, on receiving reinforcements, Mountjoy moved against the Spanish force, and captured the eastern post of Rincorran. Hearing that Tyrone and O'Donnell were marching towards Kinsale, Mountjoy endeavoured to intercept the latter before a junction between the two was effected, but the superior marching of the Irish frustrated the attempt. Before the end of the year other reinforcements, and the Earl of Clanricard with a regiment of Irish, arrived in the Royalist camp, making Mountjoy strong enough to completely shut up the invaders within the walls of the town.

While these operations were in progress the missing Spanish naval division, after a fight in which both sides claimed the victory, had landed their men and stores at Castlehaven. The Munster Irish, hitherto restrained by Carew's measures, began to flock to Tyrone and O'Donnell, who had in the meantime joined forces, and been joined by O'Sullivan Beare's contingent and five hundred Spaniards. Thus favourably circumstanced with regard to numbers, they took up a position with the Royalists between them and the beleagured Spaniards. The latter had begun to suffer from a scarcity of provisions, and to reduce the numbers to be fed had obliged all non-combatants to leave the town.

Prevented by the activity of the enemy from foraging except at night, the Royalists likewise were experiencing the want of provisions. Pestilence also had appeared in their midst, and, combined with the daily desertions of their native auxiliaries and

mercenaries, reduced their numbers to such an extent that those available for duty had no rest from the sallies of the besieged and the attacks of the Irish. So far from entertaining any hope of expelling or capturing the invaders, Irish writers maintain Mountjoy contemplated abandoning his heavy equipment and retiring on Cork.

At this juncture, with everything in their favour provided they could maintain the blockade, and of that there seemed no question, the Irish leaders were persuaded to submit the demand by the Spanish commander for instant relief, to a council of war. It has been said a council of war never fights; well would it have been for the Confederates if they had not contributed an exception to this dictum. At O'Donnell's suggestion, but against Tyrone's advice, an immediate attack was determined on. Irrational as this determination was, the arrangements to carry it into effect simply invited disaster. The Confederates were to concentrate and take up position during the night, At break of day D'Aquila was to sally out, join Tyrone, and, in conjunction with the others, fall on the Royalists.

What followed may be briefly described. Tyrone's divisions marching to take up position were startled by hearing heavy firing in the direction they were going, but on arriving at the appointed place found neither friends nor foes. When the day broke, Tyrone approached and surveyed the English lines. Too weak to hazard an attack alone, he gave the order to retire, and when doing so met O'Donnell's division,

till then wandering aimlessly about through the ignorance of their guide. While Tyrone's infantry were crossing a small stream running into the Bandon river they were attacked by Royalist cavalry. O'Donnell's cavalry came to their relief and drove the opposing horsemen over the ford. Thinking to destroy at one blow all the Royalist cavalry if they were on his side of the stream, O'Donnell ordered his horsemen to clear the ford and allow the enemy to cross. When executing this movement the Irish cavalry broke the ranks of their own infantry, and causing them to fall back on Tyrone's men, threw them also into confusion. Before the disorder could be allayed Clanricard and his Irish, charging them in flank, converted it into a panic-stricken rout. O'Sullivan's, Tyrrel's, and the Spanish regiment, having preserved their formation, fought their way clear and retreated. The Royalists then retired to their entrenchments, and fired a *feu de joie* in honour of their victory. Upon hearing it the Spaniards, mistaking it for the signal of attack, sallied out from Kinsale, but were speedily driven back.

Irish accounts explain the firing which alarmed Tyrone's men by the assertion that Mountjoy, being aware of the plan of attack, despatched a force to the intended rendezvous with instructions to fire as i. engaged, and then return. English versions do not mention this, but admit they received a hint of the meditated attack through the bibulous propensities of the MacMahon. That they were prepared is certain, but that the scheme with all the necessary details was disclosed through the means alleged is doubtful.

In the native versions of the occurrences during the night two distinctly national characteristics appear prominently. Mountjoy's artifice, if productive of no other effect, had certainly shaken the spirit of Tyrone's men. They had heard the firing, seen the ground whereon it had taken place, still there was no indication of an engagement or combatants. Therefore, to them, some supernatural agency must have been at work. The Irish mercenaries and auxiliaries had been deserting as fast as opportunity offered, and had signified their intention of continuing to do so. Yet they fought against the very men they were to have deserted to with all the national vigour and want of consistency.

These are but side lights ; there is no necessity to go beyond the actual occurrences to account for this adventitious defeat and the ensuing panic. What really is inexplicable, except on the supposition of treachery, is, that the Confederates having halted within eight miles of the scene of their defeat, and indulged in a long and acrimonious consultation, should have abandoned all further efforts to carry out the purpose which had hitherto kept them united.

One pregnant reflection to Irishmen will be found in the fact, that on this, the last occasion when a large native force under native leaders took the field for purely national and not dynastic or sectarian purposes, their defeat was due mainly to their own countrymen ; Clanricard and his Connaught men practically won the battle. On its conclusion, "the Lord Deputy, in the midst of the dead bodies, conferred knighthood upon the Earl of Clanrickard."²⁵

²⁵ *Pacata Hibernia*.

The Spanish force in Kinsale, unable to shake off the iron grip of Mountjoy, and seeing no hope of relief from the Irish, capitulated and were sent home. Those who had landed from the second division of ships at Castlehaven and survived the fight outside Kinsale, carried on hostilities in the west, in conjunction with the Munster men.

The struggle continued for some months longer. Tyrone returned to his own district and kept a regular force of Royalists and numerous volunteers at bay until, having burnt his own castle, seen his country a prey to famine and pestilence, and the remnants of his army reduced to the last extremity of want, he made terms. Roderick O'Donnell (who had succeeded Hugh Roe) successfully maintained himself in Tyrconnel against Lambert and other captains for some time, but eventually made terms also.

On the death of the Queen the only important chiefs still in arms in the north were O'Rourke, Maguire, and MacGeoghegan. In the south the monotony of Royalist success was varied by O'Sullivan Beare's attack upon the force gathering for the siege of Dunboy, the heroic defence of that ill-fated castle, and the check to the pursuing Royalists near Glengariffe. Slight successes only, but leading up to an exploit which, considered solely by the light of hostile accounts, remains without parallel in contemporary military annals.

O'SULLIVAN BEARE'S MARCH.—No longer able to subsist in the remote corner where he had made a last stand, O'Sullivan Beare had the alternative of

surrendering—tantamount to consigning all his followers and people to the hangman—or endeavouring to reach the north, and there obtain the shelter his native district had ceased to afford. He selected the most generous course, and in the depth of winter, with four hundred fighting men, and six hundred aged and infirm men, women, and children, set out from Glengariffe.

Scantily provided with the bare necessities of life, but possessing ample funds obtained from the Spaniards), the fugitives endeavoured to purchase food, but so complete was the scarcity and great the terror created by the Royalists, the inhabitants were unable or afraid to traffic with them. Disappointed in their efforts to obtain food by legitimate means, O'Sullivan's men resorted to plundering. This led to resistance from those having insufficient for themselves, resistance provoked attack, and attacks led to reprisals. The hostility of their countrymen, who otherwise would have covertly assisted them, was not the only disadvantage from this unfortunate beginning: the delay caused by it afforded time to set all the local Royalist forces in motion. From every side they converged upon the fugitives, garrisons left their posts for the purpose of cutting them off, and their erstwhile besiegers followed in pursuit.

Thus menaced from all directions; the front fighting for every mile of the road gained, those behind continually beating off pursuit, the fighting men reduced to subsisting on herbs and water, the sentries dying at their posts from incessant fatigues, these brave

men—whether rebels or patriots that honorable expression cannot be denied them—pressed steadily on, invincible in daily conflicts.

Hunted like their native wolves, they traversed Cork and Tipperary, and on the seventh day, defeating another body of the enemy, arrived on the banks of the Shannon. From the slaughtered horses, whose skins were required to construct boats, they had one plenteous meal, and began crossing the deep and wide river. Misfortune dogged them even in this, for the smallest of the two boats sank and ten fighting men perished. The remainder crossed, to find eight hundred foes gathered to dispute their further progress. With the courage of despair, and a force irresistible as the mighty breakers on the Atlantic-washed shores of their distant homes, they overwhelmed these also.

Reduced in numbers, but undismayed, they pressed on to Aughrim. Again attacked in force by the Royalists, they drove them off with the loss of their English leader.

By day repelling attacks and searching for food in a country where the very birds and beasts found no sustenance; at night, when under cover of darkness the peasantry dared guide them, the Irish left the shelter of bog or woody fastness, and stole by unfrequented ways through Roscommon and over the Curlew hills. At daybreak on the fourteenth day of their flight their guide, a man of saintly mien who scorned to take gold for his services, pointed out in the distance O'Rourke's castle of Lisbrin. They

were safe : the survivors. Of all those that left the south there arrived, thirty-five men and—one woman, only. The remainder had fallen in the fights, strayed from the march, succumbed to cold and privation, or, in the words of Carew, had been found, “hurt and sick men, and their pains and lives both determined by the soldiers.”

END OF THE WARS.—With the death or submission of the northern chiefs, and the dispersal of the southern forces, organized resistance ceased. The subjugation of Ireland was complete, as it had never been before, and the Elizabethan wars were at an end.

The last act of the drama fittingly illustrates the characters of two of the principal performers. When resistance was no longer possible, thirty thousand pieces of gold, and two ships' load of powder arrived from Spain ; Tyrone and Roderick O'Donnell sent both back.

Various reasons have been assigned for the collapse of the Irish. The want of soldierly qualities on the part of the men, capacity for leading on the part of the leaders, and the indulgence in factions and political animosities, have been the principal. Some are partially, others wholly, untrue of the vanquished. None of them do justice to either side ; all leave unnoticed the tenacity of purpose of the victors.

Owing to their insular position, and inchoate nationalism, the Irish suffered from a double process of attrition : the effect of the Crown policy in detaching nobles and chiefs from the confederation, and the inability to replace loss in men or munitions. The

population was small, and since the supply of Scots had been cut off, there were no means of replenishing at once the depleted ranks. Though several of the Irish leaders were equal to any on the other side, the Irish, unlike their foes, had not an apparently inexhaustible supply of capable officers trained to arms and diplomacy. Difficult as it was to obtain leaders and men, it was still more difficult to adequately arm them, so long as the English remained masters of the sea.

Though nothing resembling a naval blockade was attempted (except at Kinsale), the task of subjugation was simplified, if not rendered possible, by the English navy retaining, not alone the power to pour in men and supplies to any extent necessary, and to restrict or prevent the Irish receiving assistance, but to do so at any point they chose in a country practically all coast line.

In conjunction with a fleet, the operations of Sir Henry Dowcra round Lough Foyle seriously hampered Tyrone, led to the recall of the troops lent by him to the Munster Confederates, and contributed to the establishment of the ascendancy attained by Sir G. Carew over that province. At a critical period later on, the assistance rendered by Captain Harvey's vessels at Castlehaven, proved, from a tactical point of view, invaluable to the land forces.

If we consider the stimulating effect of such help from Spain as did reach the Irish, we cannot doubt that, had the naval strength of England proved less than it was, the task of forcibly reducing Ireland

would have taxed the resources of England to the utmost, and taken much longer to accomplish.

These are, and must remain, matters of conjecture. But with regard to the Irish as soldiers, there is ample warranty for claiming that during the Elizabethan wars in Ireland, Irish soldiers, Royalists and rebels alike, asserted undeniable demands to a share in that military reputation since gained under every flag, and in every quarter of the globe, by their descendants.

THE ARMADA MASSACRES.

Throughout the series of sanguinary attacks and reprisals constituting the Irish wars of the 16th century, there are singularly few authenticated instances of the Irish being guilty of unusual cruelty or inhumanity. Time after time massacres were perpetrated upon them, and defeat frequently meant extermination. Yet, though countless opportunities offered, the occasions when they murdered their opponents, or imitated their methods of dealing with prisoners, were so notoriously few that, by some, their mildness was attributed to a pusillanimous fear of consequences; from others it compelled the acknowledgment that as a people they were neither cruel nor vindictive.

Instances illustrative of this national freedom from one of the most salient characteristics of the period are so frequent as to pass unheeded. It is, therefore, a matter of interest as well as justice, to discover upon what grounds an accusation has obtained general credence, that, if true, would not alone invalidate the claim made on behalf of the Irish, but would lead to the inference they were wanting in the ordinary feelings of humanity.

ATTRIBUTED TO THE IRISH.—This accusation appears in a narrative professing to be the Spanish story of the Armada, and is to the effect:—"The wild Irish were tempted by the plunder, the gold chains

and ducats were too much for their humanity, and hundreds of half-drowned wretches were dragged out of the waves, only to be stripped and knocked on the head, while those who escaped the Celtic skenes and axes too weak and exhausted to defend themselves.”¹

. . . In another, and more ambitious work, the writer of this formulates a statement that, when in want of food and water, sick and storm-tossed, three thousand Spaniards from the defeated Armada were done to death by the people of the west coast.²

Before examining the evidence upon which these allegations rest, it is necessary to point out they are not supported by any of the well-known Spanish narratives; neither by Captain Fernandez Duro’s account, though this was admittedly based upon what he had gathered from English sources, nor by the particulars communicated to their Ambassador in France by two Spanish soldiers of the Armada who managed to escape and reach that country, and certainly not by Captain Cuellar’s narrative.

AUTHORITIES FOR.—As far as can be ascertained from the accusations themselves, they profess to embody the reports of Sir G. Carew, Sir R. Bingham, Sir G. Fenton, the Hovendens, Edward White, and Lord Fitzwilliam. To estimate their value we require to know something of the personal or official standing of the writers, how their information was obtained, and whether there were any general or particular reasons for presenting it in the form we are familiar with. Carew and Bingham have been already dealt

¹ Froude.

² Froude’s *History*.

with. Their connection with the Armada episode was briefly :—

About the time the massacres on the west coast were said to have occurred, Carew, as acting Master of the Ordnance in Ireland, was engaged surveying munitions of war in the various forts and castles held by, or for, the English. Later, we read of him superintending the recovery of guns from the wrecked Spanish vessels.³ It is obvious, therefore, the information he communicated to Lord Burleigh and Walsingham, must have been obtained from others.

Sir R. Bingham at the same period was Governor of Connaught. From his impregnable stronghold at Athlone went out the order to arrest, shoot, or hang, all and every Spanish fugitive met with. From there also he despatched his brother into Mayo to carry out similar barbarities. Though admittedly responsible, through his orders, for the execution of at least eleven hundred refugees, Bingham did not come into actual contact with any, except prisoners.

Sir Geoffrey Fenton had been Secretary to the Irish Privy Council, and a confidential and secret correspondent of Burleigh and Walsingham. In 1583 we find him corresponding with Walsingham anent the proposed assassination of Desmond, and there is still extant a letter of Fenton's suggesting the assassination of any troublesome Irish chief, not in easy reach.⁴ Being in the west, and hearing that a number of Spaniards had landed in MacSweeney's country, Fenton seized Sligo Castle, and reported a

³ Calendar Carew MSS.

⁴ *Life of F. MacCarthy More.*

force of two thousand Spanish moving from Lough Erne to attack him.

This report of Fenton's illustrates very strongly the value and reliability of official communications; although, at one period during the autumn, there really was an armed Spanish force of about the numbers mentioned in the locality, nothing appears to have been further from their intentions than an attack upon the fortified castle of Sligo. In the first place, it was a physical impossibility; in the second, the Spaniards were disheartened and cowed, mad with the expectation of unknown and therefore doubly terrifying dangers. Not one of the six score vessels that started from Corunna but carried some noble and gallant gentlemen accustomed to warfare with the elemental forces of nature as well as with the enemies of their country. Yet, regardless of this dual experience, and the counsels and monitions of the numerous clerics with them, the result of the expedition was only too apparent. What the enemy had contemptuously spared was being pursued to destruction by the elements with a malevolent pertinacity, unknown to the most experienced mariner, gentle or simple. To get back to Spain as speedily as possible was the sole desire of the leaders. Back to the sun and warmth was all the rank and file asked.

The Hovendens (Anglo-Irishmen) were in command of Royalist forces near Lough Foyle. Their communications to the Lord Deputy, beyond the information that a Spanish force had been driven ashore in the O'Dogherty country, are now considered

fabrications. It will not, therefore, be necessary to quote them except where their action brings the natives on the scene.

Edward White was, or had been, Mayor of Galway. An official certainly, and probably a relative of the then Master of the Rolls, Sir Nicholas White.

The Queen's representative at the time was Lord Fitzwilliam. On hearing Spanish vessels had been driven ashore he issued orders to arrest or kill the crews. He then left Dublin "to go against them." Hearing further that several Irish lords of the coast counties had obtained treasure from the wrecked ships, Fitzwilliam caused two of them, MacToole and O'Dogherty, to be arrested and detained in prison. Both were well known for zeal and loyalty. MacToole, being in receipt of a pension for his services, soon obtained his release. O'Dogherty stayed in prison until a bribe to the Lord Deputy procured his release also.

Fenton's direct information, and for the matter of that Fitzwilliam's also, consisted of what they could gather from inspecting the dead bodies and wreckage cast up in Sligo Bay. Beyond this they were indebted to their subordinates, English and Irish. To test the value of their information, even had there been any desire to do so, was practically impossible. It is now known that in the number of vessels, and their human freight, cast ashore, these informants carelessly or intentionally exaggerated, a proceeding justifying us in treating them as unreliable in other particulars.

OFFICIAL ATTITUDE.—The well-known tendency

of English officials to represent the Irish in the attitude most suitable to their own purposes has been already mentioned. On this occasion there was a more than usually important reason for a portraiture adapted to certain ends. On the appearance of the Spanish ships off the Irish coast a great commotion ensued among the officials. They were aware the direct invasion of England had failed so completely as to render any further attempt on similar lines improbable for some time. And though they were not aware of the terrible losses sustained by the Spanish fleet in doubling the north of Scotland, they knew that a plan existed for using Ireland as a base from which to invade England. To them, therefore, the appearance of the Spaniards presaged the execution of this plan rather than the result of accident. Above all, these officials were aware that in the then state of the country—disaffection of the natives and paucity of English troops—the presence of any number of Spaniards would be the signal for a general upheaval of disaffected elements in the north, south, and west. Should this occur, the probable result to them was a foregone conclusion. Thus menaced, the first and most natural course was to prevent a junction between the actual and potential enemy. If this proved impossible, and the position of affairs seemed to indicate that it would, then every effort must be made to produce a rupture in the friendly relations existing between them. In every official narrative of the events on the Irish coast that is the key note. Carew and Fenton openly boasted of their reports having that

effect, and as both were literary, and capable of turning phrases, they must be supposed to know.

Events favoured the English. Dire necessity compelled the Spaniards to land in places distant from the protective control of those chiefs known to be friendly to them, but within the area of English arms or influence, thus enabling the latter to complete the work of destruction, and publish to the world at large whatever version of the occurrences a desire to embroil two of the actors in the tragedy could suggest.

SPECIFIC INSTANCES OF MASSACRES.—The specific instances of massacres given in Froude's history are those at Clare Island and Burrishoole, the bodies seen by Fitzwilliam in Sligo Bay, and the murders by MacCabbe. The Clare Island incident bristles with improbabilities or concealment of facts. From Mendoza's ship all the treasure, and one hundred men only, were taken on shore. Though the ship was in a sinking condition the remainder of the crew and soldiers were left on board. A storm arose, and all on the vessel perished. Presumably, the reason for landing the treasure was that in the unseaworthy condition of the vessel it was safest on shore. If this was the case why leave all but one hundred men on board? According to Bingham, these men, Mendoza the commander, and all on the ship, were murdered to obtain the treasure. Consider the improbabilities involved by these statements! Did the Irish overpower the vessel before the storm broke her up? What was their object in doing so if the treasure was on shore? To obtain this they

must then have overcome the men landed. Without doubt if the men were landed as stated they were intended as a guard, and were, therefore, armed. Now the one thing the Spaniards were admittedly superior in was the number and efficiency of their small arms, a superiority that certainly guaranteed them against any successful attack from the local Irish. Clare Island occupies the centre, and Burrishoole may be described as the north shore of Clew Bay. All this district was in the possession of the O'Malleys—notorious pirates. Their chieftainess, Grana Uaile, the renowned Queen of the West, had a castle in the vicinity, and it was behind Clare Island her ships were accustomed to shelter from the Atlantic storms. That these freebooters were concerned in whatever occurred in the locality may well be believed. The direction of their participation may be imagined. One of them, said to have been a subordinate of Bingham's, was accused of killing one hundred ship-wrecked men with his own hand. Probably some rumour of this incident, and the well-known reputation of the O'Malleys, suggested to Bingham or his informants the substance of their reports.

“The sea was not answerable for all, The cruelty of nature was imitated by the cruelty of man, and those lines of bodies showed gashes on them not made by rock or splintered spar.”⁵ A gruesome picture, intended to convey the bodies were those who had fallen victims to the insensate brutality of their fellow-men—suggestively the Irish. They were

⁵ Froude's *History*.

in reality the bodies of the drowned from three large galleons driven ashore in the Bay. Others, to the number of three hundred escaped, and though stripped, and in some cases maltreated, by the Irish, were, as far as possible, saved by them from "execution" by the English or Royalists prowling about the vicinity. Of this, the worst disaster of all attending the attempt by the Armada to weather the coast of Ireland, we have in the narrative of Captain Francisco Cuellar a curiously vivid and impartial description.

CAPTAIN CUELLAR.—Cuellar was on board one of the vessels cast ashore. After the vessel broke up he reached the shore on a spar, and was discovered by two Irishmen, who concealed him under some rushes and grass. The next day, when wandering about in search of food and shelter, he was warned by the natives whenever any Royalists were in the neighbourhood. By these sympathisers he and some compatriots picked up in his wanderings were passed on to a village of O'Rourke's. From there he was conveyed by a disguised priest to the castle of a subordinate chief. Early in the following year he was given shelter in the country of O'Kane, Prince of Derry, eventually reaching Scotland, and from thence home. From Cuellar we also learn that some Royalists were present when the galleon's people were cast ashore, and that by them several, who had escaped the more merciful waves, were plundered and hanged. He further records his opinion that had it not been for the friendliness shown by the native Irish not a single Spaniard would have survived the wrecks.

DON LUZON'S DIVISION.—From the experiences of the Spanish division under Don Luzon, driven ashore near Lough Foyle, we can likewise learn somewhat of the treatment received from both Royalists and Irish. On landing, the Spaniards forwarded a message to the Roman Catholic Bishop of Down, and were invited by him to repair to his castle. On the way they encountered a Royalist force, and some fighting took place. Hemmed in and starving, the Spaniards, on promise of quarter and conveyance to Dublin, were persuaded to surrender. Their captors were the Hovendens, who, having stripped them all, put the officers aside for ransom, and proceeded to shoot down the common men. In the confusion, about one hundred and fifty escaped, reached the Bishop's residence, and were there sheltered. When the coast was clear they were passed on from chief to chief until sent to Scotland for greater safety.

OFFICIAL PARTICIPATION.—That other refugees, exclusive of those admitted to have been put to death by the Bingham, were massacred by or at the instigation of English and local officials there is ample proof. The execution of the crew of a small provision vessel by order of Sir E. Denny, the Military Governor of Tralee, though indefensible even on the ground of a private grudge against Spaniards in general entertained by Denny, would pass unnoticed only for the significant admission in Norris's attempt to extenuate Denny's action; "that there was no other safe-keeping for them."

A letter published by the Historical Manuscripts Commission opens up a further vista of what took place in out-of-the-way parts, of which no official record was kept. Sir V. Browne, writing to the authorities for permission to retain the twelve horse-men allowed for his protection as an "Undertaker" mentions; "their services upon the Spaniards." Browne had taken up land in the west of Kerry not far from the scene of the alleged massacres, and wrote a short time after the Spanish alarm, and, we may assume, was careful to mention the services most likely to be appreciated by those he was soliciting an indulgence from. We can imagine what the services of the horsemen were! There is, further, O'Sullivan Beare's statement founded on information from eye-witnesses and residents in the localities implicated; "the English killed such of the strangers as they caught." ⁶

When the Spaniards were able to land with any degree of order they were not at once overpowered and slain like vermin by either Royalists or Irish. It was only when spurned by the waves; human flotsam, unarmed and defenceless; that the nebulous rights then accorded the defeated or the shipwrecked were denied them.

CONNECTION OF IRISH CHIEFS WITH.—Had the shipwrecked men been murdered to the number or in the manner described, some corroborative circumstances in the actions or events contemporaneous with the massacres would be producible.

⁶ O'S. Beare's *Ireland*, &c.

We read of one only. That O'Neill (Tyrone) wrung his hands over the disgrace of his country. This is meant to convey that the stories of massacres were accepted as true by such well-informed persons as the great northern chieftain; an implication not warranted by Fenton's mention of the incident in his report to the Privy Council; where O'Neill is said to have bitterly reproached O'Donnell for doing service against the Spaniards. The value of the whole incident is discounted by the fact that at the time the O'Donnell, an old and infirm man, was capable only of mourning the captivity of his son—the afterwards famous Hugh Roe. His wife, younger and of passionate disposition, was moving heaven and earth for vengeance on the English for the same reason. Were other proofs required of the attitude of the O'Donnell sept, we find among the chiefs concerned in succouring the castaways was the MacSweeney, a subordinate to O'Donnell. So well known were MacSweeney's proceedings that O'Rourke sent him five hundred beeves to assist in feeding the Spaniards.

That O'Neill was inclined to extend hospitality and protection to the Spaniards, was suspected. That he had actually given shelter to them was afterwards discovered by the interception of a letter thanking him for so doing, from the Spanish commander. That some of the befriended men were desirous of taking service with him, was also discovered. Another chief accused of sheltering the fugitives was O'Rourke, Prince of Breffny. When summoned by Bingham to surrender them, O'Rourke replied that it

would be inconsistent with his honour and dignity as a gentleman and prince to give up men who had claimed the rights of hospitality. Deaf to reasoning of this nature, Bingham proceeded against O'Rourke, and reduced him to such straits that he took shelter in Scotland, from whence he was sent to England, and, without the formality of a trial, executed at Tyburn.

Irish writers have admitted that, in addition to those mentioned, several chiefs when giving assistance and shelter to the refugees, made overtures to their commanders to combine against the English. Though declined, the fact of an alliance having been contemplated is opposed to the probability of any general or large massacre, or that the Spaniards came ashore in the defenceless condition that would have permitted it. These accounts further state that the English killed such of the Spaniards as were captured, that many remained in other districts besides O'Neill's, and some were sent on to Earl Bothwell in Scotland.

The Irish, who entertained exaggerated ideas of the claims of consanguinity, considered themselves blood relations of the Spanish nation. A few years after the dispersal of the Armada, a southern chief, writing to the King of Spain, uses the words: "His people bear a hearty love and natural affection to our ancient, most loving kinsfolk, and the most noble race whereof we descend."⁷ Months after the remnants of the shattered fleet had returned to Spain, so well known was it that many soldiers and mariners were

⁷ O'Sullivan Beare.

even then unable to get way from Ireland, that articles of peace with Galway chiefs usually contained the stipulation, "they shall forthwith deliver to the Lord Deputy such Spaniards, Portingalls, and other foreigners of the Spanish fleet, as are now amongst them."

SPANISH ATTITUDE,—The following year, after numbers of Spaniards had returned from Ireland, and their government was in possession of all available information, their intercourse with the Irish did not diminish, nor was the friendly feeling interrupted. A Spanish invasion of Ireland was projected, and anxiously expected by the Irish, while no less an authority than Carew predicted that should it take place all the Irish would join them. A few years later, Killybegs, a port in the vicinity of which two Armada vessels were lost, was visited by a succession of Spanish vessels, landing supplies and accredited agents; and within thirteen years the largest Spanish force that ever landed in Ireland was at Kinsale and Berehaven, acting in concert with the natives of the districts where their countrymen were supposed to have been so foully done to death. In the *Pacata Hibernia* a long conversation with a Spanish officer after the surrender at Kinsale, is given at length. Though abusive of Ireland and the Irish, no mention is made of the massacres. Finally, at the conclusion of the war a general exodus to Spain of nobles and chiefs with their families took place. To say they were received with open arms by all ranks and classes would inadequately express the warmth of their

reception. Spanish character has never been suspected of forgetfulness of injuries, nor minute discrimination between enemies. The alleged murderers of their countrymen were Irish. The people they welcomed to their shores were of the same nationality. Admitting that political exigencies might have prompted the two Philips to ignore the massacre episodes, is it credible the Spanish nobles and people would have forgotten them so soon?

Tradition, which has carefully preserved many otherwise unrecorded incidents, is unusually silent on the subject of the Armada massacres. The most circumstantial legend was that current in Clare as late as the 18th century, in which a renegade Brehon, Clancy by name, Sheriff of Clare, is said to have, in pursuance of instructions from the Lord Deputy, put to death a number of Spaniards in his district.

FIGURES.—The capacity of figures to prove anything fails in this instance, for by no process of manipulation can they be made to support the accusation. Whether supplied by Mr. Froude, based upon the numbers composing the force engaged, the number of ships, the fate of the divisions under Sidonia, Da Leyva, and Recalde, figures can be no more than approximate. Such as they are, the one possibility they tell most against is, that three thousand men were massacred on the Irish coast.

In conclusion, unless we reject the accepted rules of evidence, and subscribe to a theory that the deepest and most abiding of human impulses are liable to be forgotten for no discernible reason, we must admit the

allegation that three thousand, or any large number of Spaniards were massacred by the natives of the west coast of Ireland, not only fails for want of proof, but, humanly speaking, is inherently improbable. This improbability has not been made manifest through any recent discovery of new authorities or proofs. As a factor in the controversy, it was always present, and should at least have commanded hesitation or qualification in making the accusation, even if it had not caused the charge to be relegated to that oblivion where so much savouring of racial dislike, and religious rancour, has found a resting-place.

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